

SPECIAL FEATURE

Final Fantasy VII

» Greatest PlayStation game ever?

PREVIEWED INSIDE

MORTAL KOMBAT DECEPTION

Ed Boon is back...

KILLER7

Bringing a heavenly smile to gamers everywhere

» MERCENARIES

Time for some hard-core action

SPECIAL FEATURE

" Jak 3 vs Ratchet & Clank 3

Who said platform games are dead?

PLAYTESTED THIS MONTH:

» ONIMUSHA 3 » HYPER STREET FIGHTER II: ANNIVESARY EDITION
» RISE TO HONOUR » FIGHT NIGHT 2004 » MOJIBRIBON » TRANSFORMERS » ALIAS
» SERIOUS SAM: NEXT ENCOUNTER » VAN HELSING » TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES
» WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP RUGBY » SINGSTAR » THE SUFFERING » HITMAN: CONTRACTS

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READY FOR THE TRUTH ABOUT VIDEO A AUSTRALIA GAMES?



AUSTRALIA'S BEST UNOFFICIAL PLAYSTATION2 MAGAZINE!

playm

EDITORIAL

CLIMB EVERY MOUNTAIN...

Goodness me. Can you believe it? The PS2 is the oldest and, let's face it, lowest-spec member of the current console generation. Not that you'd know it.

Have you seen the recent (and forthcoming) crop of PS2 games? Titles like Ghosthunter, Rise to Honor and Killzone look, quite frankly, fantastic. Kind of puts the console horsepower race into perspective, doesn't it?

Or perhaps you've noticed the price wars. Other consoles rely on price drops to bribe punters into buying their hardware; only the PS2 stands firm on price, insisting that it's good value for money. 72 million consoles shipped and counting...

Then there is, of course, the small matter of software. With so many games available for the PS2 (over 700 titles) there's bound to be something for everyone, right? Right. Sony could get lazy and pump out rubbish sequels. Or they could get innovative on us, and bring out products like EyeToy and SingStar.

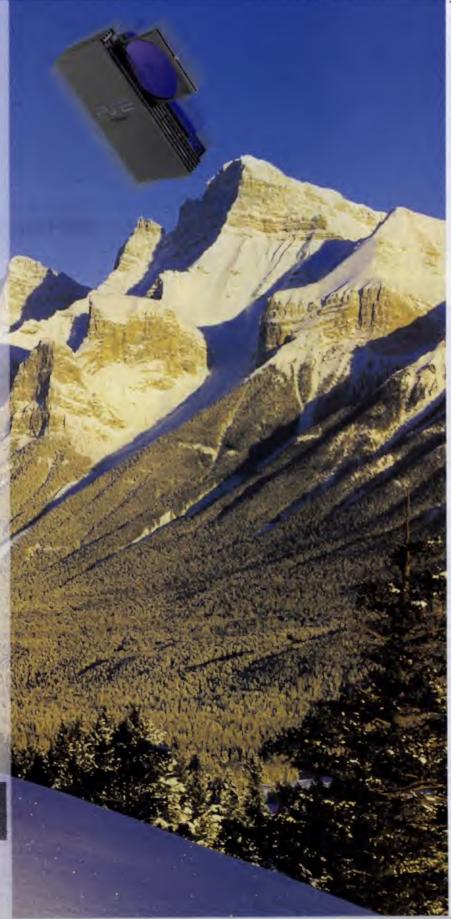
As if all this wasn't enough, we have just three letters for you: PSP.

And three more: UMD.
At this year's E3 we finally got our hands on Sony's new portable console and it's clear that even with total dominance of the market, there are still mountains to climb, worlds to conquer... you get the picture.

We're impressed with Sony's determination not to rest on its laurels. With stiff competition from both Microsoft and Nintendo, we can't wait for the battle to unfold. It's all up for grabs once again, dear reader.

Who is the smart money backing? We think the answer to that is kind of obvious...







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Lead Preview: Killer7

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Feature: Jak 3 and Ratchet & Clank 3

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ON THE CHEATS CD

Comes The Pain, Just Bring It, Shut Your Mouth; plus I-Ninja, Sonic Heroes, Mafia, Grand Theft Auto: Vice City, Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II and more.



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SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS



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The search for the Greatest PlayStation Game Ever continues this month with play** S Mat Hoddy laying down the law and telling us why too is the only real choice. To be fair to Mat, he's actually got a pretty strong argument. Don't just take our word for it though, turn to page 24 to find out why this little piece of joy is just that.



FINAL FANTASY VII

play**'s Nick Powell puts down some poetry to explain why Final Fantasy VII may well be not only the greatest RPG of all time but also the single greatest piece of software to ever enter this realm. Thankfully, the piece itself takes the game a lot more seriously than this intro does the piece.











turn the page. Wait, that's not true, but our reviews certainly are.





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SUBSCRIBE

play* offers the kind of hard-edged opinion that can only come with experience and integrity. Its strong brand means that it is first choice for gamers who want both trustworthy and entertaining reviews. Turn to page 56 for more details.

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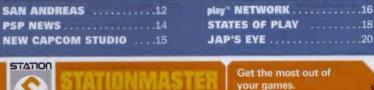






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NEW CHEATS

98 NEW CHEATS
The key to triumph lies here

99 CLASSIC CHEATS
Because we all like to do it really.

FINAL FANTASY X-2



IF DEADLY ALLIANCE WAS THE RETURN, THEN THIS IS THE REBIRTH. GODDAMNIT, IF MORTAL KOMBAT HASN'T JUST GONE AND REINVENTED ITSELF

ow come on, hands up who was surprised by the success of Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance. [play™ team unanimously raises arms...] After a long period in the wilderness, last year saw Midway revive its most famous, most controversial franchise and, to be frank, we thought it didn't stand a chance. What with Tekken and Virtua Fighter (to name but two) the genre has moved on considerably since the days when Mortal Kombat ruled the arcades. The time had passed when it when it was Sub Zero versus Scorpion, fatalities and over the top blood and gore. Surely it would sink without a trace.

We couldn't have been more wrong. Deadly Alliance not only turned out be a more than decent game but also managed to shift the kind of numbers that Tekken et al could only dream about. To date, and across all formats, it's sold somewhere in the region 2.6 million units. That is what's known as a triumphant return.

Il seemed that the return of Mortal Kombat filled a that modern fighters had forgotten about: fun for the sake of it. Forget learning King's multiparts and all those ten-string combos, Mortal Kombat is a game that's all about having immediate pick up and play fun - it simply doesn't take itself too seriously. Mortal Kombat is all about the joy of committing an ultra violent act on your opponent, which for the most part, means on your friends. So yes, it was a huge success.

Are you ready for another surprise?

As Ed Boon, Mortal Kombat co-creator and top guy on Deception, puts it, "We're trying to do the least expected thing." Deception isn't simply an update of Deadly Alliance - as the cynical among you might expect - but is a complete reworking of the franchise. It's like they put the whole Mortal Kombat thing into the meat grinder, cooked it up a bit and voila! Deception cakes. Mmmmmmm.

Mortal Kombat: Deception is actually four games in one. They are, quickly recounting them, the one-onone traditional fighting game, a puzzle game, a strategy board game and the build-your-own-fightergame, all just as important to the 'new' Mortal Kombat. But we'll come to those last three in a minute - but first off, the fighting.

The core of the thing, naturally, is the actual fighting engine and this has had a pretty major overhaul. Keen to take in some of the feedback on Deadly Alliance, Midway has stayed faithful to the series (and its legion of fans) with the inclusion of some brilliant new fighters (names under wraps for now) and has included some classics - Baraka is now in lovely 3D a move that should please countless MK nuts. There's the obligatory new moves with you now getting two fatality moves per character. There's also a new indicator system which is intended to educate more casual gamers to the depths that a modern beat-'emup possesses - a simple system of traffic lights indicates when a player might be susceptible to a reversal move, or a counter (potentially a more damaging attack), or when they a defensive mode and shouldn't be attacked. Ill good. The









Arenas can be used as weapons in their own right. Manoeuvre you opponent (or just get lucky) into the right area and with a decent blow, you'll knock them into one of many different (and suitable gory) death traps.



This guy is hit into a wall.



...he then slides onto a lump of molten metal.



Ow! He begins to crawl-



...bang! The mould slams down...



.crushing him into a bloody smear! Nice.







A cross between Stratego and Chess, the boardgame game sees you trying to defeat your opponent's 'king' piece – each battle on the board is decided by a single round of Mortal Kombat.







PUZZLE

It's Puzzle Fighter in a Mortal Kombat universe. No bad thing, we reckon – match the colours up, detonate them with the 'Kombat icons and watch as the two mini fighters below slog it out!



Some backdrops feature weapons – these not only make your fighter more powerful but also add a whole load of new moves





Trail you'd have to 'open up' the weapon - one and your apponent into its case is good to

Then all you have to do is grab it.

...and smash his bleedin' head in. Lovely.

A full sequence of shots depicting the destructible senery. This time this guy got lucky – he only plummeted to another arena, it could have easily been a pit of spikes!



ARENAS

A small example of the variety of arenas in *Deception*. Most are huge with multiple areas, deathtraps and weapons.







dimensional, interactive environments.

Each backdrop has a completely different make up, with different features encouraging you to play with different tactics. One arena we saw took place atop a volcano, with the edge of the fighting space slowly crumbling away making the arena smaller and smaller

biggest change, however, is with the fully three

oliterent tactics. One arena we saw took place atop a volcano, with the edge of the fighting space slowly crumbling away making the arena smaller and smaller and pushing the fighters closer together. Obviously one tactic would be to force your opponent into walking onto a crumbling area and so plummet to his doom. Another might be to purposely walk onto an edge area and then reverse your opponent onto the edge just as

Other arenas are far more complex and offer much more tactical scope. Many of them feature multiple areas like DOA 2 – knock a fighter through a wall and (after a fall) the fight continues. But this is Mortal Kombat and here knocking an opponent into another area can have much more serious consequences. Not only will any fall do a lot of damage (and have a visual impact on the landing area) but there's a chance you could fall into one of the numerous traps – these could be spikes, rotating blades and grinders to name but three. And you aren't going to survive one of these. Some arenas even contain weapons – grab one of these and not only does your fighter become a far more powerful one but you get another load of moves to play with.

The idea behind this is to make every fight interesting right down to the end, so that even if one fighter has only a few pixels of health left, he still has a chance to win. Of course, *Mortal Kombat* aficionados can still fight *mano y mano*, old style rules in old style arenas. Hardcore will never die!

But this new openness shows that Mortal Kombat isn't afraid to evolve and change with the times. The

Aside from the traditional Versus game, Konquest is the main part of *Deception*. There is, however, much, much more to it than that.

Next up we've got the Chess. Yep, you read that right - Mortal Kombat has moved into the world of turn-based strategy. Kind of. You've played Stratego, right? It's a game similar to Chess with pieces of different values of strength and movement. Now imagine each piece on the board a character from Mortal Kombat - characters in different roles that you've decided on. So, say Scorpion is the character you're best versed in, you might want to make him your 'Queen' (no jokes, please). No good with Sub Zero? He could be your 'king'. Players take turns in moving their pieces with the objective being to defeat your opponent's 'King' piece - but whenever two pieces meet, a battle ensues. This is dealt with in time honoured fashion - with a round of the Mortal Kombat fighting game. Weaker pieces will have less energy than the stronger ones. Simple. There are also special squares on the board which can act as traps (springing pieces straight off the board without any combat) or will restore energy, again making the match more strategic. The idea is that each game of Chess will last no more than 10-15 minutes in total, with each player moving his pieces quickly around the board - there won't be any two-day Chess marathons here.

And still there's more. The final game is, ahem, 'based' on Capcom's Super Puzzle Fighter II, a game that appeared on PSone about six years ago. If you're not familiar with it, it's a bit like Tetris in that blocks fall from the top of the screen and you have to arrange them so that, when triggered, they'll fall making chains. It's a battle, after all, so

KONQUEST

Or Career mode, if you will. Guide a novice fighter through six worlds of Mortal Kombat training him in fighting, unlocking secrets and 'living the dream'. Once complete you can use your custom fighter in the regular fighting game.



THE CORE OF THE THING, NATURALLY, IS THE ACTUAL FIGHTING ENGINE AND THIS HAS HAD A PRETTY MAJOR OVERHAUL

key, we think, is that it retains the spirit of the previous games while incorporating some of the features from modern fighters. It's almost like *Mortal Kombat* has grown up.

As such, the new Konquest mode will go a long way to give you plenty of replay value and combines elements from games as diverse as SEGA's Shenmue, GTA III and Deadly Alliance's own training mode. Set across six worlds, you play a single character in a kind of, well, adventure. You walk around the worlds, talk to people, find items and secrets (unlocking bonuses like in the Krypt in Deadly Alliance), go on quests and leam how to fight, incorporating those moves leamed into your own personal fighter's skills. Think of it as an all-encompassing training/adventure game featuring the Mortal Kombat fighting engine.

Certain events will only become available at a specific location and at a specific time of day and some information will even be misleading, hence the name *Deception*. You begin as a 16-year-old fighter and end as 60-year-old master, your custom fighter now ready to enter (and be selected) the world of the *Mortal Kombat* Versus mode.

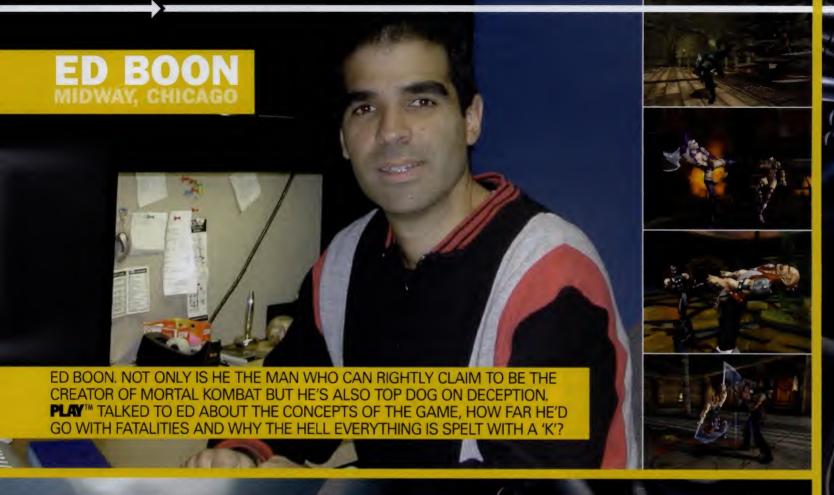
while your chains send blocks over to mess up your opponent, two big-headed *Mortal Kombat* fighters slug it out at the bottom the screen. It's all highly entertaining and so, so addictive...

Actually, did we say that *Mortal Kombat* has grown up? Ha. That's not entirely true — it's still the same loveable over-the-top blood and guts fighter that dominated the sales charts and the consoles of the early nineties. It still revels in ultra violence and the visceral appeal of blood but boy, has it come a long way. *Deception* is a game that proves that a well-established franchise can move with the times and still please the fans that made it so successful in the first place.

From what we've seen of it so far it's a beat-'em-up that's falling over itself to deliver 'game' to the player. Midway could have simply added more fighters, more moves, new fatalities, a few new backdrops and people would have lapped *Deception* up. But with the Konquest mode, the board game and the puzzle game all vying for your attention, it's a game that doesn't stop giving.

Right, now what was that fatality combo again?





Were you surprised at the success

of Deadly Alliance?
Yes, I mean, I was guessing we'd do okay but it really took off. Now we're at something like 2.6 million [units sold] and we were really taken aback. It's been five years almost since Mortal Kombat 4 came out and that was on a previous generation, on the PSone, the Dreamcast and all of those. So the PlayStation2 came out and it was out a few years with no Mortal Kombat game and people were kind of used to the last generation. So when people saw much better presentation and the introduction of the fighting style changes. This all added something new and I think that contributed to it. course we did receive requests for things that we couldn't possibly put in the game.

One addition are the game modes, are these just fillers?

Even the guys on the team were 'are you sure you wanna do all that kind of stuff?' and you know we got some more people on the team to handle the different modes and now when we see it coming together we're really excited about it. I had to push that whole thing, I really believe that it will be something people appreciate. I'm very confident about all this stuff.

Do you think gamers are used to the violence that has made MK

Did you get a lot of feedback from the fans?

Oh yeah, and everything we heard back was applied to this game. In the last game we had one fatality and people wanted two or three so right off the bat we knew we wanted to do that. And then we added the whole hari-kari moves, it'll be interesting to see how the reaction to that is. But basically everything was jotted down that was requested for the next game. A lot of people were asking for the old characters and this has become a big focus in the game. Of

What with Grand Theft Auto and some of the horror games, I don't think Mortal Kombat stands out with any shock value anymore. When that first game came out it was really singled out with controversy and all that. The whole rating system wasn't in place when the first MK came out and when part two came out there was an M rating on it. I think Mortal Kombat has been around for so long now it's not as shocking.

Why the arena traps?

I wanted to make the game with as

many choices as possible. You can literally have one pixel left where in the previous Mortal Kombat games you're pretty much dead, you can't even block, but in this game you still have a chance. Your strategy will change, so you're going to back up to the edge of this collapsing wall and you'll have a chance to win. I think having this 'it's not over till it's over' approach will make it different from other games.

Won't this luck element annoy the hardcore fans?

We definitely have an adjustment on the game to turn that stuff off so if somebody wants to play just arena combat they can. But I think if we were to stay the same people would think 'okay, been there done that', there's nothing new to try out. That's the dangerous path to take.

Favourite Mortal Kombat character and fatality?

I definitely play Scorpion the most and my favourite fatality in the whole game is probably Sub Zero's spine rip from the first game. That was inspired by Predator. In the new game Baraca has this one where he slices you at the waist, then cuts off your arms and stabs you in the middle pulling your entire torso away which is pretty good.

It must be fun picking new fatalities?

They're really hard to come up with because you've done like a hundred of them before. We have 30 to 40 guys on the team and any time

anyone has an idea for a fatality they write it down and give it to the animators. To come up with 48 unique fatalities sounds easy but there are limitations to the technology. You can't just cut someone's head off and take their brains out, it takes a lot of work to do that. Anybody can think of one but to think of one that can be done and is cool is the difficult thing.

Is there a limit to what you would do in a fatality?

I think for me the limit is doing something that somebody might actually think of doing. I don't think we'd ever do something that someone in real life would do, so instead we keep everything as outrageous as possible. You know you grab their arms, rip them off and keep everything so extreme. So basically anything that is leaning towards reality we kind of steer away from, we're more about the supernatural and the unbelievable.

Finally, why the 'K's?

I don't even know where that started, I think it was with one of the guys on our team when we were trying to name the game. We were going to call it Dragon Attack, Kumitee and, you know, all these Van Damme type movie names. Someone suggested Mortal Kombat, then someone said let's spell it with a 'K' and then all the words started being spelt with K. It got a little out of control.

DIANTM SAVAGING THE WORLD FOR THE LATEST ...

ONEWS



12 THE EARTH WILL MOVE

GTA is back, bigger than life and twice as bad. San Andreas is set to re-define the GTA series once more, with more cities, more options and more gameplay than ever before.



PSP AT E3 Sony finally let us get our hands on the PSP at E3. Publishers were appounced (a)

our hands on the PSP at E3.
Publishers were announced (as were final specs), gadgets shown and screens marvelled at – now we just need to play the games...



ROUNDUP

Capcom consolidates (and sets up a new studio); Solid Snake to get a new voice (maybe); plus rumours and gossip. See everything.

It's a funny time of year. With E3 (LA's Electronic Entertainment Expo, for those of you who've been living under a rock) falling at the worst possible time in our production schedule, we've managed to bring you the key stories from the event and they're also likely to be the two biggest stories in video gaming (PlayStation or otherwise) this year.

The latest instalment in Rockstar's crime opus, Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas was shown off-site but tongues were wagging about it all week. Can Rockstar do it again? Based on what we've seen, we'd have to say... oh yes, no doubt. Prepare yourself for the wildest GTA ride yet.

Inside the show itself,
Sony and Nintendo squared
off by unveiling their new
handheld machines.
Speculation was rampant
as to which machine would
'win' but we believe that
the consoles – Sony PSP
and Nintendo DS – are so
different that they'll each
have their own unique
audience. Still, there's no
prize for guessing which
one has us the most
excited...



Rockstar // GTA: San Andreas

PSP SOFTWARE IS GO

IT'S ALL GO ON THE PSP FRONT

ony used March's Game Developer's Conference (GDC) in San Jose to highlight the number of developers working on PSP games, with 81 teams already hard at work on the handheld's first run of titles.

This was followed at E3 by the announcement of additional publishers (including holdouts SEGA, Konami and Namco), bringing the total to 99 (24 North American, 31 European, 34 Japanese and 10 South Korean).

In other news, Criterion has ported its RenderWare tools – in their entirety – to PSP, as well as engineering PSP support into its standard Renderware Studio. The software, currently used by many PS2 titles including Burnout 2, Sonic Heroes and Vice City, should ease development for the format, which many companies have already suggested is more user-friendly than the PS2.

Finally, the GDC also saw PSP support from Havok, which will optimise its practicallyuniversal Havok Physics Engine for the system. "PSP is an incredibly exciting platform for Havok," suggested Havok's Chief Technology Officer, Dr. Steven Collins. "Our experience of delivering solutions on existing game consoles gives us confidence that we will soon be providing a really compelling solution for g me title developers on this platform." Though this statement sounds like little more than press release gush, the incorporation of Havok technology is a genuinely exciting prospect for the PlayStation Portable.



SONIC



SEGA has announced it will be producing a bundle of EyeToy software based on its most famous properties SEGA Superstars, which contains EyeToy-compatible games starring Sonic The Hedgehog, Samba de Amigo and characters from House Of The Dead and the Virtua Fighter series, should become available before the end of 2004, "It's great to have an opportunity to reach a wider audience, stated Yuli Naka, President of SONICTEAM.

APING THE CLASSICS SMORT STORY ((



Peter Jackson recently expressed a desire to 'do a Wachowski' and take directorial control over videogame adaptations of his next film. The director, currently prepping his remake of King Kong to star Tenacious D's Jack Black as journalist Carl Denham opposite Naomi Watt's take on Fay Wray, hopes to ensure the game's quality. Let's hope he does a better job than the Wachowskis, whose Enter The Matrix was hardly a stretch for the PS2.

IT'S SAN ANDREAS!

ROCKSTAR CONFIRMS A DATE FOR NEW GTA

enials, misdirection and multiplepatent subterfuge... it's been a rocky
road between the release of Vice City
and the announcement that GTA: San Andreas
will indeed be the next instalment to see the
light of day, but after a long wait, all manner of
stupid rumours and some of the smuggest fan
forums to ever grace the internet, everything is
finally set in place. Grand Theft Auto: San
Andreas will be released on 22 November, just
three days after its North American release
date, and just in time for a boom Christmas for
Rockstar Games.

The decision to go with San Andreas as a title and concept will surprise few – as the third city to feature in the original *Grand Theft Auto* on PSone (after Liberty and Vice cities, respectively), it always seemed more likely a choice than many fan-hopefuls (such as Bogotá, Columbia – probably gleaned from a jokey Rockstar promo sticker). In fact, having trawled several *GTA* forums since the announcement, **play™** is yet to find a single poster who will admit to having put their money on a different location. However, indecision is certainly rife as to what gaming

content the next GTA may encompass, and whether or not it relates to the real San Andreas region of California.

SACRAMENTO

NEVADA

SAN FRANCISCO

• CAN ALDREAS

ANGELES

LAS VEGAS

EAUTINE

indecision is certainly rife as to what gaming

The GTA senes has never been afraid to commit itself to a specific concept or historical time period – both GTA: London and Vice City confined themselves to a specific time frame in order to lampoon the zeitgeist and fashions of the era. San Andreas is not a city... it's a state. A fictionalised version of California, no less. The gameplay area comprises three cities and all points in between. That's right, three cities. Los Santos (Los Angeles), San Fierro (San Francisco) and Las Venturas (Las Vegas). Each city is as big as Vice City and when you include the countryside in between the urban centres, the game is somewhere between four and six times the size of

its predecessor

Each city has its own flavour, in terms of geography, inhabitants and gameplay. San Francisco/San Fierro is famous for its hills, for example so we can expect lots of driving missions there. We'll also be seeing a more fully-realised system for buying real estate and perhaps even managing your gang's turf

managing your gang's turf.

Then there's the countryside. We've never had mountains in GTA before... but we do now. Driving from one city to another is an expenence we can't wait to sink our teeth into. And we just know the Rockstar crew will have some interesting surprises for us in the great outdoors. The hills are alive, didn't you know?



THE ORIGINAL TOMINY VERCETTI?

SAN ANDREAS HAS ITS OWN CRIMINAL HISTORY

Between 1875 and 1883, the town of San Andreas was home to its very own career criminal, though unlike the protagonists of the GTA series, he never fired a gun and was respected as a gentleman despite his penchant for repeatedly holding up stagecoaches in and around Stockton, CA. Charles E Bolton, notoniously known as 'Black Bart', wore a flour sack as a mask and would leave whimsical poems at the scene of each roadside siege. He was caught in 1883 when a handkerchief left at the scene of one hold-up was traced back to an LA laundry house, only for Bart to happen into the laundry at the exact same moment as Stockton's investigating sheriff.



AUTO ERRATIC

HOW DID WE GET HERE FROM VICE CITY? IT'S BEEN A BUMPY RIDE...





NOV 2002

GTA: Vice City is released to a rapturous reception, going on to become a major best-seller.

MARCH 2003

GTA: Sin City supersedes San Andreas for many as the most likely next instalment, based on a talk radio soundbite heard in Vice Cit Meanwhile, other fans hear a reference to Carcer city on GTAIII's Lips 106 radio station and assume this will be the next title.

MAY 2003

Forums suggest San Andreas will be set in Thirds Cricals Other titles now suggested include the classy GTA, Gan Bang. Other rumours suggest title technology needed for the next GTA is so great in which appear until Place.

NOV 2003

Rapper 50 Gent at ward to be hard at work mounting acres original solinators maletine for the part GTA.

FEB 2003

The name 'San Andreas' is first thrown around as a title, after Rockstar craftily copyrights the website name. Net-heads begin to 'confirm' scoops for new locations, including Bogotá, Cuba and, erm, Belfas

APRIL 2003

'News' regarding 'GTA5' claims it will feature rocketfiring and bullet-proofing upgrades for cars

JULY 2003

Apparently, news surfaces from Rockstar that the next G7A will be on ine. Funny how they've

SEP 2003

next GTA will be set in the near little giving license to every impreciate and indea of what a niture car would only ke

DEC 2003

Rocketti Germa Loeman several posedili fullic Industria Euri Anareas, Rocciti and Sivilasi

PERFECT TO A FAULT

SAN ANDREAS, CALIFORNIA: A ROCKIN' PLACE TO LIVE

Aside from the fact it apparently never rains there and has one of the coolest reputations on earth, it's not all plain sailing in California. For a start, they've got Mr Schwarzenegger for a governor and the region is strangle-held by a daunting amount of debt. And then, of course, there's the region's propensity for large-scale earthquakes.

Extending vertically along the west coast of America, the San Andreas fault is the most famous fault line on the planet, and in 1988 was given a 20% chance of producing a massive earthquake by the year 2028 by USGS (the United State Geological Survey). As it stands, the last sizable quake to hit the fault occurred in 1966, though minor tremors of varying magnitude are recorded constantly.

This feature of the real San Andreas area naturally leads to dreams of a quake-riddled gaming environment, possibly with shifting geography and 'trigger' areas which become closed off or opened up after an in-game tremor, However, Rockstar will not be pressed on the issue yet, though more geological information of the virtual kind is expected during E3 in May.



PERPETRATOR

In the tradition of the *Grand Theft Auto* senes, you'll be playing as a criminal.

This time, however, you're not just a professional thug. Carl Johnson, your after ego, escaped the San Andreas region to make a new life for himself. Now it's the early 90s and Carl has to go home. His mother has been murdered and his family is falling apart Even his childhood friends are on a collision course with disaster.

Even his childhood friends are on a collision course with disaster.

Despite his noble intentions, things go from bad to worse for Carl. Framed for murder by a couple of corrupt cops, Carl is forced to fight. To save his family. To save his friends. To save himself, And if, along the way, he has to deal with corrupt copy and take control of the streets... then so be it.

All well and good. Just remember, as Carl Johnson, you'll need to look after yourself. You'll need to eat, for example, but if you don't also hit the gym you'll get fat which will reduce your stamina, causing you trouble in on-foot missions. It'll also influence the reactions of those around you – after all, a chubby gangster isn't nearly as imposing as a buff mother*ucker.

MODUS OPERANDI

This is where things get really interesting. All NPCs in the game have their own brain' and will react intelligently to your actions. The game will also have a dynamic difficulty system, helping avoid situations where you get stuck on a mission and can't advance. You'll also be able to recruit a gang and command your criminal empire. Four-man drive-by, anyone?

Four-man drive-by, anyone?

Money is always important, so between missions you'll be able to indulge in a little friendly break-and-enter. Indeed, Rockstar have been hard at work to blur the distinction between free-roaming and mission-based play, with the side missions giving you opportunities to gain new skills and free-roaming play the opportunity (as always) to add to your coffers.

to add to your coffers.

In addition to cars, San Andreas will also introduce bicycles. We know of one industry veteran who's already salivating at the chance to bust out some big BMX moves on the hills of San Fierro already. More seriously, bikes can be a handy getaway and reconnaissance vehicle.

and reconnaissance vehicle.

Finally [well, not really, but we're running out of space), the combat system has been improved, with the targeting system based on the one we saw in Manhunt.

FEB 2004

Possessor officially confirms from Archine in the pier garper of the sector. Serf Archine energy free mass ensure the copyright GTA.

MAR 2004

Processing surpounces communing two honder pumps, India lime pumbing the data propose and condens was refulpe glass for all tertors in the final game. Probably

JAN 2004

The budy Mone "amagined" our former Mappy Montage moletime and professional thing-surging Shaun Riche will be visiting a character it may PSQ mag alon confirms the world's foremust both and J. Finners, will be sourced at by provided a mode.











PSP UNVEILED

AT LAST, WE GET TO TRY OUT SONY'S NEW BABY

There were two big stories at E3. One was the undercurrent of speculation about Rockstar's latest entry in the *Grand Theft Auto* series, *GTA San Andreas* (see story, pp. 14–15). The other was the upcoming battle for the hearts and minds of mobile gamers ushered in by Sony (PlayStation Portable) and Nintendo (Dual Screen).

Except that the battle might not ever really unfold. The two machines are very different beasts, likely to appeal to two very different audiences.

Nintendo's DS is a GameBoy Advance on steriods, with two screens (one of which is touch-sensitive), a stylus, both wi-fi and a proprietary short-range wireless networking protocol and some impressive looking technical demos. It's a device with massive potential and (possible) broad appeal, but in reality it's unlikely to interest Sony's target audience.

The PSP, on the other hand, is a stylish portable media device. It looks fabulous – more like a glossy black iPod than a game deck – has a very impressive screen and a range of peripherals including a GPS module, telephone, USB keyboard, external battery packs and headsets with and without microphones.

The specs have been finalised at last and it'll be in our hands early next year, with a Christmas 2004 release in

Japan and first quarter 2005 for North America and Europe (which includes us).

Getting to actually handle a unit was a definite highlight. It feels good in the hands and the controls were immediately familiar. The real surprise was the quality of the screen. With its 16:9 aspect ratio it's set for widescreen movie-watching but we're concerned about battery life: we suspect the display will suck down a lot of juice. There were a number of great-looking games on show but all were in development, leading to speculation that the PSP cases (which were anchored to their display pods) were actually hooked up to workstations running PSP emulators.

Sony was also touting the number of developers it has already signed up to work on PSP products – nearly 100 companies from all major territories.

So. The stage is set, the battle-lines drawn. What we need to know now is the price. Sony hasn't confirmed anything yet, Sony is well aware that a price point over \$500 is likely to be fatal and that the closer to \$300 they can get, the better. Nintendo is making similar noises so we're confident of a mighty struggle for our dollars. Both machines look good – but you can only play Wipeout (a perennial favourite here at play** HQ) on PSP...







Sony in PSS

DEVELOPMENT HEAVEN

IT'S ALL GO ON THE PSP FRONT

ony executive Vice President
Andrew House used March's
Game Developer's Conference
(GDC) in San Jose as an opportunity to
highlight the number of developers
working on PSP games – a staggering 81
coding teams were already hard at work
on the handheld's first run of titles,
suggesting that there is unlikely to be a
shortage of quality software to
accompany the console's release.

At E3 a number of additional publishers were announced (including holdouts SEGA, Konami and Namco), bringing the total to 99 (24 North American, 31 European, 34 Japanese and 10 South Korean).

In other news, Criterion has ported its RenderWare tools – in their entirety – to PSP for use with future titles, as well as engineering PSP support into its standard Renderware Studio. The software, which is currently used by many PS2 titles including *Burnout 2*, *Sonic Heroes* and *Vice City*, should ease development for the format, which many companies have already suggested is far more user-friendly than the PS2.

Finally, the GDC also saw PSP support offered by Havok, which intends to optimise its practically-universal Havok Physics Engine for the system. "PSP is an incredibly exciting platform for

Havok," suggested Havok's Chief Technology Officer, Dr. Steven Collins. "Our experience of delivering solutions on existing game consoles gives us confidence that we will soon be providing a really compelling solution for game title developers on this platform." Though this statement is little more than press release gusy, the incorporation of Havok technology is a genuinely exciting prospect for the PlayStation Portable.

PLAYER, HAYTER?

RUMOURS OF SNAKE'S DEMISE POSSIBLY NOT EXAGGERATED

ollowing last month's Metal
Gear camouflage update, some
interesting news has emerged
surrounding the prospective casting of
Hideo Kojima's next MGS instalment.
On 26 March, news stories started
popping up across the Internet detailing
an open casting call, apparently put out
for voice performers to fill the open
roles in Konami's imminent jungle
stealth-'em-up.

The biggest surprise here? Well, the cast list, which featured over twenty named characters (including such intriguing monikers as 'The Sorrow', 'The End' and 'Major Zero') also put out the call for a voice actor to play Snake himself, suggesting David Hayter will not

be returning to lend his gravel-dragging tones to the character. Hayter has previously voiced Solid Snake in both *Metal Gear Solid* titles. However, there are several possible reasons for his non-involvement this time around.

Firstly, Snake Eater is set in 1964 and is therefore removed from the pseudo-modem technological influences of MGS1 & 2 – many Internet rumours have suggested that the 'Snake' of MGS3 is more likely a forebear of Snake rather than the man himself. Another possibility is that Snake Eater's protagonist is actually Big Boss, the original soldier from whom the Snake line was cloned. Of course, there could be another, altogether more simple

answer – that Snake, having not begun his smoking habit in the mid-sixties, merely sounded younger, and Konami is searching for a less grizzled tone to give voice to a younger Snake. Interestingly, the casting sheet also put out a call for Ocelot, suggesting that Patrick Zimmerman will also not be returning to his familiar character, while current internet speculation suggests Hayter might well be busy writing Alan Moore's Watchmen for the big screen.

Whatever the answer may be,
Konami has so far declined to dignify
the press release with a response,
stressing that "Konami policy is we don't
comment on rumour".Not very helpful –
but we'll keep y ou posted.



Will a Metal Gear title be the same without



David Hayter is currently providing voiceover duties for Eidos's Shellshock: "Nam '67.



Ocelot has been a fan favourite, but how did the crow-footed cowboy sound in the Sixties?

Capcom // Shinji Mikami

IT'S ALL CLOVER

CAPCOM STALWARTS MOVE TO PASTURES NEW

ast month, when Capcom closed several of its smaller development houses outside home city Osaka, raised voices could be heard throughout the industry, telling stories of a once great company in dire need of rejuvenation. But it seems these wicked tongues spat their venom a little prematurely, as it transpired that Capcom's plans were altogether less desperate than mere loss consolidation, and that the development favourite was about to open a brand new independent game studio.

To be headed up by Atsushi 'Viewtiful Joe' Inaba, Clover Studio will retain Capcom as a financial parent but will function as a wholly independent company, its goal being to allow itself the freedom to explore new gaming avenues and develop original game concepts. Joining Inabi at Clover will be Resident Evil creator Shinji Mikami and Hideki Kamiya, director of Devil May Cry, making Clover a development dream team with an enviable pedigree.

Clover's first two titles will be PlayStation2 conversions of the Gamecube's scrolling platform beat'em-up Viewtiful Joe, and its imaginatively entitled sequel, Viewtiful Joe 2. Ironically, Capcom announced that Devil May Cry's Dante will be playable as an extra character in the PS2 version of Viewtiful Joe, while VJ2 will enable gamers to take on the role of Sylvia, elevated from her role of 'girl in distress' in Viewtiful Joe.

The third title announced by Clover is called Okami (which means 'wolf'), and

draws heavily from Japanese spirituality (see screen grabs below). Placing the player in the role of Shinto sun goddess Ameratsu (in the form of a white wolf, no less), the player must destroy a darkness-plagued world of monsters in order to restore light and colour – it's an interpretation of a classic Japanese folk tale, in which Ameratsu restores light to the land by emerging from self-imposed exile in a cave. In keeping with the rural theme, the visual style of the game is cel-shaded and reminiscent of traditional Japanese ink art, animé and Sony's Mojibribon.

Quite how the creation of Clover Studio will affect the workforce left back at Capcom remains to be seen, but it is unlikely either developer will remain silent about their future plans for too much longer.







RUMDUR CONTROL

NO LESS THAN 50% GENUINE: SEMI-GUARANTEED!

o sooner had Eidos announced its decision to purchase Danish hit(man)makers IO Interactive, than the publishing king announced it is already developing a follow-up to the not-yetreleased Hitman Contracts, with ensuing sequels to appear the same time every year until the world stops moving. In other Eidos related whispers, the company has expressed satisfaction with the way Lara is progressing under the programming control of Crystal Dynamics, with unofficial rumours suggesting that Ion Storm's big man Warren Spector has been 'loaned' to the new Croft manor to help with the number one lady of PlayStation's big new comeback.

We've also seen a couple of possible fanboy-wish-list items receiving widespread repetiton, relating to the Metal Gear Solid series. The first suggested that Nintendo's own Mr Mario, Shigeru Miyamoto, will be joining forces with Hideo "Snaaaaaaaaaaake! Kojima to design the follow up to Snake Eater, following a solid working relationship forged during the development of The Twin Snakes on GameCube. Another (albeit less likely) tattling suggested that picture-phone facilities will be incorporated into the next MGS title, meaning that photo snaps taken on your phone in the real world can be used to camouflage your playable character in the game!

Meanwhile, Sony's was a bit quiet last month, probably in preparation for a gargantuan series of product unveilings around E3. One report that managed to filter out of Sony HQ, however, saw the company in talks with a "prominent-yet-unnamed internet service provider" in an attempt to get PS3 network gaming organised before the machine has even hit the shelves and to ensure downloadable content for the service will be universally available to all. If all goes to plan, Sony should have the premier online service for the next generation of videogame consoles.

Finally, suggestions have been filtering through that Square Enix's opening PSP gambit will either be some sort of Final Fantasy compilation (with several early FF adventures crammed onto a single UMD for your retro-gaming pleasure), or — even better — a couple of separate new FF titles, one of which may even link to FFXII on PS2. Of course, these last rumours were reported by a laughably unreliable source, but considering that the original stories stem from Japan, there's at least a glimmer of hope.

glimmer of hope.
Until next month...

play METWORK

A NEW MONTHLY FEATURE DEVOTED TO GETTING THE MOST OUT OF BROADBAND GAMING ON YOUR PS2

BATTLEFIELD: MODERN COMBAT

EA MAKES WAR JUST FOR FUN

ollowing the enormous success of PC titles Battlefield 1942 and Battlefield Vietnam, EA will be bringing its unique brand of online combat to PS2 gamers with Battlefield: Modern Combat, which takes the original gameplay elements from its PC counterparts and drops them from a chopper into a contemporary urban setting.

And what gameplay elements they are. Choosing from a variety of military roles that practically encompass every job in the armed services – including engineer, sniper, rifleman and vehicle driver – it is your job to support the other players on your team in an ongoing battle. Of course, there's an element of videogame pseudo-realism here, so if an essential comrade falls

you'll be forced to swap your role for his in order to complete his goal and therefore aid your team's ultimate progression. It's a move away from the clutch of current online titles that still manage to make you feel like you're playing on your own, despite being part of a twenty-strong team.

Swedish developer Digital Illusions has included three environments to

raze to the ground and fill with enemy corpses - United States, China, and somewhere called 'the newly formed Middle East coalition' (obviously to liken the campaign to any real current war would be simply immoral, while it would apparently be fine to invade the Middle East if they weren't hampered by all that pesky civil unrest) - and each location will be filled with the latest war technology, from tanks to choppers to heavy weaponry. Additionally, Network Play's servers will be chugging just thinking about the prospect of 24 players battling simultaneously with constant ranking updates, but dammit if EA isn't going to just go ahead and enable such a madman's design when the game is released in late 2004.



At this stage the visuals aren't exactly wowing us, but the potential for a good laugh in spite of this remains.



Looks like EA is spending its bucks big-time on this one. The vehicle combat should offer a welcome dimension to the warfare.



The game proposes to enable up to 24 players online, which should lead to a helluvalot of chaotic fun.

Eldos // Crash 'n' Bum

CRASH 'N' BURN



The early press shots hold up well to the recently released Burnout 3 screens. This could turn into quite a close battle.

ust before **play™** went to press, Eidos announced it will bring Climax's new *Burnout*-with-bellson to the PS2 network, and we just couldn't wait to show you these exclusive, pre-E3 screenshots.

Players choose a car, before customising it inside and out, adding



Crash 'n' Burn isn't just a cool name, it actually features burning crashes.

CLIMAX GOES FOR THE BURNOUT CROWN

extra components, some go-faster stripes and a phat spoiler on the back if you so desire. Then the racing begins – supercharged and nitrous-fuelled, spread across Miami, LA, San Francisco and New York, with sixteen controllable vehicles taking part in each race. Crash 'n' Burn's dual objectives are pretty simple: win the race, and ram every other car right off the road.

Eidos has confirmed a variety of game modes, including 'Last Man Standing' (the last car left with four wheels wins) and 'Bomb Tag' where every course is fitted with multiple-angled, player-controlled camera set-ups. If these renders are any mark of the quality we should expect from Crash 'n' Bum, then it should definitely give Burnout 3 a run for its money when it's released later this year.

NETWORK GAMES LIST

NOT SURE WHICH GAMES ARE COMPATIBLE ONLINE? READ THIS FIRST.

SOCOM: US NAVY SEALS

TWISTED METAL: BLACK ONLINE SONY

ROCKSTAR

HARDWARE: ONLINE ARENAS

SONY

SIERRA TRIBES ARIEL ASSAULT

FIFA FOOTBALL 2004

RAINBOW SIX 3

SOCOM II: US NAVY SEALS

COMING SOON

MONSTER HUNTER

RATCHET & CLANK 3

SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW UBISOFT

SYPHON FILTER: THE OMEGA STRAIN SCEE

ONLINE REVIEWS

CHAMPIONS OF NORRAT

Producer: UBISOFT | Developer: SNOWBLIND | Players 2-4 | Reviewed: 114 | Score: 86%

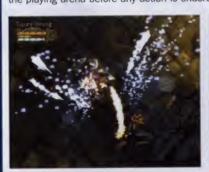
Okay, so Champions Of Norrath is little more than a glossy, modern Gauntlet update, right? Well, yes. But that's not to say that it falls short of satisfaction in the same way as just about every other modern update. No sir - if anything, Norrath comes into its own online. Imagine a split-screen Gauntlet, if you will, where it is possible to leave your party and venture off alone, rather than all four of you being restricted to the same screen tile. The level of freedom offered, and the degree of spontaneity this encourages in the gameplay, really highlights the strengths of Snowblind's title and allows the game to become something more than the hammer-the-fire-buttonforever hijinx of its now legendary predecessor.

It is also possible to communicate using a USB headset, meaning strategies can be agreed upon from opposite ends of the playing arena before any action is undertaken. And at what

point did Gauntlet allow you to do this? Consider too, the fact that the scope for character development has come a long way since Gauntlet, and that Norrath's virtues enable you to add 'customizable characters'. Snowblind has included a feature which allows you to take your one-player character and weapons online and barter with them, allowing for some varied encounters in the randomised environments.

To be honest, Norrath still has its limitations, and very few gamers will fall in love with it as they would perhaps a narrative-led adventure or RPG game, but online, Champions Of Norrath shows itself to be satisfying in a different way - it's just simply well programmed, good-looking and immense fun.

SCORE: ****







BOW SIX

At the risk of sounding like a tagline to a Jason Vs Freddy VII: Hallowe'en 38: now there is a new kind of fear. The difference being, of course, that this fear won't be found on the bottom shelf of Blockbuster but in fact online with a PS2 and a copy of Rainbow Six 3.

The nature of the main game encourages a calculated approach to burning lead into other people's skulls and the gameplay as a whole makes the transition to network play a smooth one. So smooth, in fact, that for the most part you'll be applying the same tactical wizardry/calamity to the online game as you were in the loner-mode, only this time with a generous portion of atmosphere pasted on.

It is here where RS3 online really comes into its own. The feeling of sneaking around the prison level with information coming in

that you are the last member of your squad left and the sound of gunfire getting louder and louder is simply just an experience to behold. And if team-play just isn't your thing there's always the all-against-all Survival mode - you just don't know terror until you've had a few rounds in the Sandstorm level. Hyperbolic? Maybe, but we've yet to find an online cohort who disagrees.

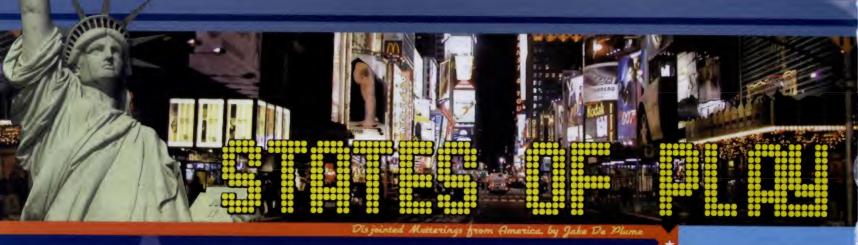
In terms of tension and sheer gameplay immersion, RS3 online outguns even the mighty SOCOM II, though the fact that there are only six allowed in any one round and the levels themselves are a tad too compact is bound to disappoint compared when to SOCOM's expansive maps. However, when considered in relation to a great single-player mode, this is very nearly a game that warrants immediate Broadband installation.











REALITY REDUX

've been this country for three years and still counting. They make no secret that they know I'm here. They've been watching me. They tolerate me. I'm not the one they're after.

It's Governor John Kerry, he wants to be the next President Of The United States. Problem is that he committed atrocities during his service in Vietnam. Not all of the five point one million people who died were combatants and Kerry can claim a few. Y'see. Kerry knew what he did was wrong, and returned to the US to protest against it as part of Vietnam Veterans Against War. Now he wants to be President because he's killed all sorts of people and knows it's wrong, while George W Bush hasn't personally killed anybody but nonetheless knows it's right.

Now there's a new group: Vietnam
Veterans Against John Kerry. They think he's
a communist for not wanting to kill
communists. He's unpatriotic. He's a red.
Being a foreigher in the US means various
things. You probably don't mind that your
teeth aren't as regimented as a military
cemetery, and you have no hang-ups
concerning Vietnam.

Drinking a pint of Sam Adams Ale, enjoying a very spicy and herbal aroma balanced by a malty, sweet finish when she said to me, "I only give to veterans, or people who are obviously disabled." She was talking about her policy for street tipping.

When I first came to New York the first thing to hit me was the smell, quickly followed by a black guy who insisted that he was The Man to clean my trainers. He had all his limbs, and wasn't displaying any medals. Maybe I shouldn't have handed him a dollar to leave me alone? Hindsight is a wonderful thing.



John Rambo took a step back and looked at what was left of Afghanistan. A job well done.



The brutally 'realistic' Shellshock: Nam '67 will be released the same year a Vietnam vet runs for president. As John Rambo once mumbled, 'It's never over''. Incidentally, can you guess which of these guys hasn't been to 'Nam?

I asked her, "Why veterans and disabled?" I wasn't drunk, but certainly relaxed to the point when my jaw could dislocate to accommodate my entire left foot. To calm down I'd have to smoke, and to smoke I'd have to stand outside the bar. A perfect location if you want at least four homeless types to ask for a cigarette.

"They had a really hard time, it wasn't their fault."

So they're both victims of accidents?

This is the day the word has witnessed images of American troops mishandling Iraqi prisoners in Bagdahd's Abu Ghraib prison.
One shows a prisoner atop a box, his arms stretched out in a Jesus Christ pose and a black bag on his head. Electric wires are attached to his arms, legs and genitals. Should his bare feet touch the floor, he'd be grounded and a lot warmer, possibly deader. During the Vietnam War, film crews were

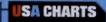


Pivotal's Conflict titles would have you believe wars are won through teamwork and looking out for one another.

allowed to pan across rows of coffins as they arrived back in the States, the cold eyes of a nation's grief. Now they won't be seen because George doesn't want to upset the families of the dead. He doesn't like it when Internet sites begin to glow with smuggled-out digital pictures of wooden boxes covered in the stars and stripes. Technology has moved on, it enables you to take an image and place it online for all to bear witness, and it will soon enable you to kill Iraqis and Viet Cong, again. Conflict: Desert Storm II is already with us, Conflict: Vietnam is on its way. In this state there is no statute of limitation for murder, but it only takes twenty nine years for a country to turn their most disastrous military conflict into formalised entertainment.

I sat back in my chair at my iMac, content with the weight and importance of that last sentence, then Sylvester Stallone came to me, riding on horseback, his body glowing from fighting with the Tailiban in *Rambo III*. He said to me, "Dude, chill out. Making light of a conflict after the fact is as natural a part of conflict as grieving."

Damn it if the Italian Stallion didn't have a point. I'd like to finish by personally thanking the makers of *Conflict: Vietnam* (Pivotal – a British Developer) and *Shellshock: Nam '67* (Guerrilla – Dutch) for helping America deal with its past. Cheers. Oh, and anyone who says the Americans can't make decent beer is a fool.





NBA BALLERS

RESIDENT EVIL:
OUTBREAK
CAPCOM

SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW UBISOFT

TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3

ALL-STAR BASEBALL 2005 ACCLAIM

FIGHT NIGHT 2004
EA SPORTS

RISE TO HONOR

MAFIA TAKE TWO

JAMES BOND 007: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON:
JUNGLE STORM
UBISOFT

RELEASES



ONIMUSHA : CAPCOM



RED DEAD REVOLVER TAKE TWO

AND THE LUCKY WINNER IS...

Congratulations to Thomas Oliver of Kenthurst, NSW. Thomas is the winner of our exclusive Ghosthunter jacket giveaway. His favourite PlayStation games are Metal Gear Solid 2, Jak & Daxter and (of course) Ghosthunter.

Now all he needs to look as cool as Lazarus Jones is a big gun... and some ghosts to fight...



PlayStation₈2







HOW TO **USE YOUR** CHEATS CD



And insert it into your PS2. Close the drawer. Choose your language by flag.



CHOOSE YOUR ctivate the cheat you want to be by pressing 3.



02 CHOOSE YOUR

Use your D-pad to highlight the game you want to cheat on and press .



Make sure you don't reset your PS2; your game will now load up, cheats and all.

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EDITORIAL

Nick Jones Lee Diviny

Amanda Winton Eoghan Barry, Will Johnston, Mat Hoddy, Nick Powell, Chandra Nair, Tim lan Dean, Kendali Lacey, Darran Jones, Greame Nicholson, Moke O'Sullin

Russell Murray, Simon Griffin

ADVERTISING

Advertising Manager Melody O'Gara mogara@paragonpublishing .com.au Telephone: (02) 9460 4524 Fax: (02) 9460 4746

CIRCULATION AND Circulation and Marketing Director Steve Maidens

PRODUCTION

Printed by Webstar Print 1/83 Derby St Silverwater 2128 Telephone: (02) 9748 0020

DIRECTORS

Managing Director Australia Mike Frey Finance Director

CEO Mark Simpson

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THE GAMES WE MAY NEVER SEE.

チトカズラ KATAMARI DAMASHI

WATLABLE NOW

an, muny of you will be into music of the wadle, funly, tripper

gamers will book at and cover to the point of leaving Namico no choice about missions it in the West.



ィスワノノチトカスラ

(AVAILABLE NOW)

Lour requy, honestly believe in the words that I say, rater here - you nould get Gunbrid 1 & 2. It's the two Gunbrid games included on one DVD. Gunble is a top-down shooting witne where your character a flying parson, not a space ship, Unlike Ikaniga or Rapian Silvergun, the game is not about parterrs and mastery of unlose gameplay concepts. It's about flying up and shooting everything. It's what we in the business call a "straight-ahead shooter. It doesn't bu to you, it doesn't hurt you. It's full of all the really cuts characters. you Westerners seem to enjoy, and everything is boldly arrimated.



(AVAILABLE NOW)

YES, YES, YES, I KNOW I talk about Dragon Quast all the bine, I can't help it. through, it's what people is Japan talk about, if they talk about videogames. I'm going to give it a little review here mough, all formal-lite. Well, at least, I'll my Where do I page? program Quest V was the first game of the writes to appear on Super Furnicom, Disport Quest IV had left most hardoore players a little upset in its dilution of the third hile a difficulty. The second game, of course, was bastardly here. The third was a little caster – though it let you choose character classes. The fourth stock you with one party of adverturiers. The fifth agor Quest VI) and the gainst was distributed by some as a mem "transition" mode. Nonpractics. this story of a young boy growing into a nero in the locasteus of his expert-rung. fuller has jumped up and Shown many Japanese businesamen, these paid low weeks, that the game they remembered from their high



hile he was smoking a cigarette and watching the Giants against the Tigers on TV, I asked my girlfriend's dad, "8,100 yen, for a game? That's a lot. That's too much." He shrugged his shoulders. "What are you going to do? It's Dragon Quest." He said it like you'd say, "What are you going to do? It's an angioplasty." Simply put, it was something he needed.

This is what Japanese business has dissolved into. Yes, I know that PS2s are expensive to manufacture. and that Sony eats a small plate of Fukuzawa Salad (Fukuzawa Yukichi, see, is the Meiji-era philosopher pictured on the 10000-yen bill, and... never mind) every time they sell a PS2. I know they only make money from games. Still. It burns me to see this. (It also burns me to see that Ninja Gaiden for Xbox is 9700 yen, though if you look at my next paragraphs, it's pretty apparent why.)

"The game's expensive because it's a guaranteed seller," my girlfriend's dad said, "Sony needs to prepare for the big losses they're going to incur when Dragon Quest VIII is released and everyone buys a PS2. Damned game might be 10000 yen. All hell is going to break loose. This city's going to be turned upside-down."

He has a really grim way of looking at things. Then again, he should know - he's the retired businessman, not me. Then again, I saw the Akihabara Dragon Quest VII riots with my own eyes. Then again, so did he. He, however, has preordered VIII. I will walk to Akihabara on that day, maybe, to see if anyone on a moped tries to hit me with a lead pipe as I leave my favorite Sofmap. Interesting times ahead over here.

NB: Dictionary definition of the word 'angioplasty':

The surgical repair of a blood vessel, either by inserting a balloon-tipped catheter to unblock it, or by reconstructing or replacing part of the vessel. Source: dictionary.com

- ゴラーズッナザズド

THIS GIRL SLEEPS ALL NIGHT, THE SLEEP OF THE DEAD, IN AN INTERNET CAFE

I was trapped in the Ikebukuro Manga Hiroba Manga and Internet Café with Tim Rogers a few weeks back, and when he was coming back from getting a Coca-Cola, he showed me this picture. Some girl had fallen asleep in her chair, with her hand touching the floor, in front of a Yahoo! Auctions page for an auction that was going to end in an hour. I asked him how he knew it was going to end in an hour. He said, "Well, I went up and had a look

at the screen." I asked him why he might walk up behind a girl who's asleep in a dark internet café in the middle of the night, and he told me, "I was thinking of touching her neck." He went on to explain that the skin looked very soft. "I also thought it would have, you know, woken her up in time to bid on the auction." I can spot the hole in his logic - can you? For a novelist, he lacks proper lying skills sometimes.

LOST IN TRANSLATION OPENS IN JAPAN AND NO ONE NOTICES

Sofia Coppolla's Oscar-nominated Lost In Translation opened in Tokyo last week, on the same day as Kill Bill Volume 2 and Casshern. However, I... don't think it's doing too well. It's only open on one theater, that being one in Ginza. I've seen the movie on DVD thanks to an American friend with an American PS2 (thanks, Chuck), and it didn't wow me, maybe because I see the Hachiko Square crossing in Shibuya just about every day. Japanese people don't feel any wonder when they cross that street. They're usually just trying to get to Starbucks. I must say I liked the movie's ending very much, however. On a related note – not two days before the movie's premiere, Suntory Whiskey changed their decades-old bottle design, so that it now looks nothing like the bottle prominently featured in the movie. Coincidental, odd, strange - or just plain weird?



MOVIE REVIEW: CASSHERN

You know, for all the attention this movie is getting on American websites that love screaming about movies, I don't think I've met a single Japanese person who's seen it. I haven't even seen it myself. It just came out last week. The previews and promotional still photos look really, really good. Hell – that's

an understatement. They look deep and rich to the point of being pretty damned scary. The story is based on an old Japanese anime called Casshern:
Robot Hunter. It's about the future, when robots have taken over the earth's crime. Casshem is a guy who kills robots. A movie of this could be really, really good. I looked everywhere for reviews, and I just didn't see them. I should just go see the movie, myself. Maybe.





- ONIMUSHA 3
- SENGOKU MUSOU KOEI
- WINNING ELEVEN 7 INTERNATIONAL KONAMI
- GHOST IN THE
 SHELL: STAND
 ALONE
 COMPLEX
- SD GUNDAM G GENERATION SEED RANDAL
- 06 GUNGRAVE OVERDOSE SEGA
- KAIDO BATTLE 2: CHAIN REACTION
- FINAL FANTASY
 X-2
 INTERNATIONAL
 + LAST
 MISSION
 SQUARE ENIX
- SHADOW HEARTS II
- 10 DBZ 2

JAP CHARTS



KINGDOM HEARTS 2

Kingdom Hearts 2 is Square's follow-up to Kingdom Hearts, a game which tried to fill the gap left by its absent collision detection with Disney characters meeting Final Fantasy characters. The second installment will seil to a million Japanese people who will then probably never olay it.

干十九大号

REGULAR REPORTS ABOUT HAPPENING EVENTS IN THE LAND OF THE RISING SUN FROM PLAY'S JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT, BT AMAZAWA





THIS COLUMN IS ABOUT DRAGON QUEST AGAIN

es, this column is going to be about Dragon Quest again. This is not to suggest a lack of creativity on my part but because Dragon Quest is a great thing to talk about. It seems to be all that gamers will ever talk about in Japan. (Note: Japanese gamers, on average, don't talk about games that much.)

If you've been following this column for the past couple of months (and if you haven't been, that's just sad) you'll know that my girlfriend's father bought a PlayStation2 in anticipation of *Dragon*Quest VIII, because he wanted to avoid the hassle of buying the system later. You'll also know that I wrote about DVDs being too expensive in this country, and about how the majority of people still don't own DVD players. Well, now I'm going to make some kind of continuity, when I say that the *Dragon Quest V* remake for PS2 is 8100 yen.

That's, like, \$105 pounds. That may not seem like much money for a game. But the

typical game in Japan is 5000 yen (\$65). Sometimes a special edition will set you back 6,900, and some of these recent games (see last month's column, about The Simple Series!) only cost 2000. Gunbird 1 & 2, also released this month, is only 4000. Katamari Damacy is only 3980. Dragon Quest V is 8100. 8300, if you get it at Bic Camera. And it doesn't have any 'limited edition' features outside of a 'teaser DVD' with a mere three-minute video of Dragon Quest VIII on it.

4_」にデビルクロブニーデン ディングン・ボデンへがごへディン・ルデ スポビンナレフ



GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY CAPCOM

Grand Thert Auto: Vice City is an interesting entry so high in the most-wanted charts. I guess the Japanese really did like Grand Thert Auto III.

ALBUM REVIEW: TOO FAST TO LIVE TOO YOUNG TO DIE BY KISHIDAN

Kishidan is a Japanese alternative visual punk/rock band masterminded by Ceronias, whose insistence that every member of the band dress in a uniform that's a mixture of Japanese schoolboy and Chinese red guard and walk on in formation. Even while on vacation this is the one detail I would have told people about when I wanted them to 'get' this band. Now, I don't need to tell you that, because they've released an album that is fiercely appealing without explanation. I'll only say this: Ceronias insists

on having a six-man chorus in all of his songs. This is most pointedly evident in track eight, Night Of The Knights, when the chorus comes in at a minute and thirty-six seconds, turning the song from crazy metal to crazy metal with an undeniable soul.

Also, one member of the band is liner-noted as being Dance and Scream. If you saw the live show, you'd understand, man.

BOOK REVIEW: IN THE MISO SOUP BY RYU MURAKAMI

I never read Ryu Murakami in Japanese because he doesn't interest me. He's a movie director, a former rock-star, and a Renaissance Man of sorts. Still. I find his books too stupidly graphic. I saw games** s Kongetsu columnist Tim Rogers reading this book in English, and he said it was a little gory, though readable, and he loaned it to me. It's about a twenty-year-old Japanese tour guide taking an American around sex clubs. He eventually realizes that this American is a serial

clubs. He eventually realizes that this American is a serial killer. He then sees him kill some people and the novel goes on to make comments about Japanese society while incorporating the number 108 in a way that Tim Rogers must have found exciting.



WHAT'S GOING DOWN IN THE LAND OF THE RISING SUN?

PS2 BOSS FIGHTS



WHO ARE THE TEN FINEST BOSSES TO GRACE THE PLAYSTATION2?

WE FIND OUT IN WHAT TURNED OUT TO BE ONE PUB CONVERSATION TAKEN WAY TOO LITERALLY

RESIDENT EVIL: CODE VERONICA



Alexia Ashford may well have had the power and the moves, but it was her twinkle-toed dandy of a brother that really lit up our cans. Shame Steve Burnside manages to pop a cap in his camp derrière really. There is one boon from this apparent demise of this twisted sister. Claire Redfield gets his sniper rifle and gets to take on the Matt Lucas of the evil realm, Nosferatu. His arm whips at you like the disentangled phallus of a blue whale, he creates noxious purple gas attacks, he has a big beating heart in the centre of his chest and you've got the wee man's sniper rifle. Seven bullets and a bit of wandering later and the undead (possibly never alive) bondage beneficiary is ready to be mopped up with a few squirts from the Upgraded Handgun and his place is earned on the mantelpiece next to other rare injection moulded possible action figures. Resident Evil AND sniper rifles. God was listening this day

REZ THE RUNNING MAN

We could have picked any one of Rez's five bosses — each one is brilliantly designed but this is the one that will stick in the mind FOREVER. Does it have a

name? We're not sure – we'll just have to refer to him as 'the running man'. Made up of a hundred blocks, you chase this animated wonder down a series of corridors, twisting and turning (shooting at the soft spot) and watching as his body disintegrates block by block. It's just so beautiful.





PARAPPA THE RAPPER 2

"In parenthesis, let me stress the fact clearly, No matter what the deal I crave for this dearly. The so-called noodles that you find in spaghetti, Are sweeter than idols, do damage like machetes! Without a doubt I got the flow, coming at ya live, Bring the place alive, every single day I jive,

With the thought comes my direct actions,
Ask my followers, they'll say it's an addiction.
Slurp it, suck it, I know you all like it.
Slurp it, suck it, I know you all like it.
Smell it, taste it, pasta in a market!
Smell it, taste it, fruit in a basket!
Chinese, Italian, Thai or Jamaican,
Mexican, Egyptian, English, Korean,
Anything goes, even Hawaiian!
Anything goes, even Alaskan!"
The greatest rap-based boss fight of all time.



METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SONS OF LIBERTY

Raiden's hair is white to show purity, according to a certain H Kojima. He was designed to be an opposing character to Snake Pliskin. To play from Raiden's point of view is to see exactly how much 'da man' Pliskin is. Solid Snake destroyed Metal Gear Rex, only after a cyborg ninja had already given the mech a decent ragging. You and I would find it hard to destroy an M1 Abrahms main battle tank with an anti-aircraft missile; Raiden, however, found no real problem despatching twelve Metal Gear Rays with one. He even had Solidus Snake on hand to jump on their head and shoot with a machine gun.





So these armoured Rays are now vulnerable to small arms fire and missiles designed to detonate away from a target. If one Raiden with one missile launcher can do all that damage, why didn't they just use an AH-64 Apache gunship? This one makes *Contra*'s list of improbable amalgamations seem quite possible. A classically daft boss fight that manages to destroy an entire game's convoluted narrative. Nice one.

ROCKY IVAN DRAGO



Communists are villainous enough but when they're beefed up on steroids, kill your best mate, fight for a living and look just like He-Man and The Punisher, you know you're in for a beasting. Ivan 'Whatever he hits, he destroys' Drago is a superb example of what makes *Rocky* such a great use of license and as a result, can deliver a tyrannical right hand lead and one towering, dramatic challenge. Frankly, anyone who can beat Action Jackson to death scares the Capitalism out of us.

ICO SHADOW QUEEN.

Most bosses require a step-and-repeat method of attack, whereby you learn a pattern of behaviour exhibited by an enemy and then time your counterattacks accordingly. Ico's boss is very different – the game requires you to succeed by defensive means, parrying away the queen's 'darkness' attacks in order to get close enough to draw blood. Of course, each time you hit her your sword flies



across the room, and you have to manoeuvre the neighbouring pillars so you are protected while unarmed. Genius.

TIGER WOODS 2003



The typical Vijay Singh shot goes as follows: swing/duddum-duddum-duddum/ close-up of his smug face/ ball lands inches from hole. Okay, so Tiger was the big boss, but beating him was as easy as clubbing a seal compared to the golfing wiles displayed by the title's penultimate Tiger Challenger – he could easily execute two consecutive hole-inones followed by a double eagle if he found himself a couple of shots down. Plus you had to play him at The Predator, the most gruelling, unforgiving course on earth. Bastard.

CONTRA: SHATTERED SOLDIER THE WHOLE SHEBANG





You know, a classically styled shoot-em-up without an end of level boss is like a mule without a spinning wheel. Really. Thankfully, Shattered Soldier knows that the term 'old school' means that the end of every level WILL be underlined by your battle with one of the most preposterously designed alien-robo-mutant-beasts. This one doesn't disappoint. Level one: mutant head that gobs fire. Level two: An insectiod mech. Three: Mechacaterpillar. Four: Giant fish with man's head. Five: Mutant crustacean with licking hands, Six: A morphing Frog, human, jellyfish, small ball, spermlaunching organism. Seven: Mecha-toad, human thing - possibly evil. Find weak spot, attack, dodge, repeat. If you want bosses, Contra is the daddy. Or boss. Or boss daddy. Whatever, it rules.

RYGAR



Though Tecmo's *Rygar* remake stuck pretty firmly to the third-person adventure template, Tecmo's decision to employ a deviant to design its bosses created one of the most disturbing to ever stand between the end of a level and the start of a new one. There can't have been many players ready for The Typhon – five wailing, and indeed fire-breathing, baby faces, attached to the most phallic of what can only be described as shafts protruding from the body of a dragon. To meet it in battle is to be defeated and forever scarred.

HYPER STREET FIGHTER II



Forget the fact that he was supposed to be called Vega, whatever nom de guerre he goes by, he's simply the hardest bastard to ever slip into a boiler suit and armoured boots. On the toughest difficulty setting Bison could tear even the most seasoned World Warrior a new arsehole, with a line in Scissor Kick/throw corner traps that would either make you weep or bite through your own lip in frustration. His Capcom Vs SNK incarnation also features the best super move ever created – the Super Psycho Crusher. Or 'Psycho Crushaaaaaaa' as he insists on pronouncing it.

play TM **GREATEST** PLAYSTATION GAME EVER

CONSIDER THE VIRTUES OF SIMPLICITY... WITHOUT FURTHER ADO, WE GIVE YOUTHE **ENCHANTING** BEAUTIFUL AND UNIQUE ICO



co tells the story of a boy who, after growing horns on his head, is earmarked by his village for sacrifice. Escaping from his prison during a minor earth tremor, he discovers Yorda, a strange. almost ethereal young girl with a mysterious power, and takes it upon himself to make an escape for both of them. That's all the game tells you before you begin, and it's all you need to know before embarking on your adventure - therein lies the simple, innocent beauty of Ico. Your role is merely to lead Yorda and protect her from the shadow demons inhabiting the castle, a task hampered by the longuage barner between you both, which must be compensated for with tactile connection and an understanding of Yorda's tentative body language.

At heart, Ico is a game of mystery and discovery, from the first switch pulled to the moment you take Yorda's hand for the final time. It's evident in the overwhelming physical enormity of the game's many chambers, often empty aside from their striking beauty and grandlose architecture. It's evident in

the complete lack of gaming tutorial offered before your adventure begins, and the way the game invites you to experiment with Ico's abilities. It's evident in the sheer range of different puzzles that lie ahead of you. Witness how only a short distance into the game, you and Yorda discover a sofa. You take a seat, and encourage her to do the same. She sits, and there's a short pause before you are silently asked "Save game?". There's no diversion from the reality of the game world - narratively, the two of you sit there, dozing together for an indeterminate time, before continuing the quest once more. The experience of play is grounded wholly in Ico and Yorda physically being in the game world, and the world being almost overwhelmingly large in scope.

The fact of the matter is that no game makes you feel like a tiny character in a massive world better than Ico, and no other game makes its challenge seem so beyond the ability of its unlikely protagonist. It requires you to think about the enormous castle environment in both logical and abstract terms; it asks you to make both quick decisions and considered strategies in order to progress further; it demands that you stay close to Yorda to protect her, yet leave her alone in order to open new routes through the game world. Such is the attachment developed between gamer and spirit child during your shared experience that even on a second play through the game, you are no more eager to leave her side even if you are certain of her safety. In a world of darkness, Yorda is light, and to lose her would mean an absence of good in this temble realm. Never in Ico are actions performed by rote, or for the sake of mere completion - they are always undertaken with the fate of Yorda in mind.

On a technical level, Ico shines as much as any game on PS2, set against an environment of





Sometimes, letting go of Yorda's hand is like asking for sudden failure. Whatever you do, don't let her fall into the abyss.



No other videogame horse comes close to capturing the equino





limitless vision, where you can often catch a glimpse of a remote location you will visit much, *much* later. Drop from a ledge, and there's no eternal freefall in *Ico* – rather, you witness your character disappear down the chasm, before a tiny, distant splash signals his inevitable stop thousands of feet below. Additionally, all the varied environments contained within are astoundingly, incomparably beautiful, with dazzling lighting effects that bleed amber across the screen, fire which flickers and crackles, animation which flows with both the fluency and awkwardness of true human physicality – just notice the level of exertion *Ico* displays

also looking to redeem yourself. So there's a sense of pride to strengthen every achievement, a sense of relief to accompany every success. Behind every mechanical button press, the game carries the weight of human emotion and the fear of being left alone and bereft of hope. And the gameplay? Why, it's just about the cleanest engine on either PlayStation, offering complete control of both Ico and Yorda with minimal glitching and almost pixel-perfect exactitude — with the added bonus of a fierce, almost familial character bond.

Of course, many games can claim to offer an expansive three-dimensional environment, but how

gaming experience, but how many developers deliver on these promises and supply a completely unique game?

For many gamers - this one included - Ico signifies a tangible high point in the history of videogames, an experience marked by memones of deep gaming satisfaction and tears of unrestrained joy (yes, it did make me cry when Yorda reached out and grabbed my flailing hand during the game's fourth act, and on several other occasions, but you'd need a heart of stone not to be affected by it). In fact, such is the legacy of Ico for those who have experienced it, that were this poll not limited to a celebration of all things Sony and we had asked you to vote for a multiformat game of all time, chances are it would still be shortlisted confidently. Why? Because Ico understands gaming the way classic Spielberg seemed to hold the formula for perfect cinema, or The Beatles understood popular music. Not bad for an under-publicised game which sold only 30 000 copies in PAL territories and was largely ignored by the majority of the gaming world the first time around. If you haven't played it, you're quite simply missing out on one of the most genuine, heartbreaking and downright human videogame experiences ever created. If you have played it, I can only imagine you will agree with me.

ICO HAS ANIMATION WHICH FLOWS WITH BOTH THE FLUENCY AND AWKWARDNESS OF TRUE HUMAN PHYSICALITY

when pulling Yorda up a ledge, or her reticence in trusting you'll catch her. Additionally, the shadow beasts, rendered in one-tone black mist, stand out as almost alien against the near-photorealistic backdrops, as does the contrasting purity of Yorda herself. It's a simple tale of good versus evil, made all the more immediate by the fact that as a horned boy, you are

many of them actually require exploration (as opposed to a plodding, linear progression)? Likewise, a number of PlayStation titles – most notably Ubisoft's recent *Prince Of Persia* – can combine their platforming with a sense of humanity, but how many of these titles elicit a genuine emotional attachment toward their characters? And many games purport to give an unparalleled



In the distance you can just make out a location you'll visit later. In about five hours, that is.



Yorda lacks your athletic ability, but she'll follow you to the end.



Switches cause granite blocks to shift into a staircase
 the sense of a palpable environment is unsurpassed.



Yorda's spiritual power is enhanced when the two of you link hands.

playm GREATEST PLAYSTATION GAME EVER

IT'S THE GAME THAT (ALLEGEDLY) MADE GROWN MEN CRY AND CEMENTED THE PLACE OF RPGS IN THE MINDS OF MAINSTREAM **WESTERN GAMERS -**THE ONE AND ONLY FINAL FANTASY VII



here used to be a conspiracy in the world of gaming, not discovered by a Deep Throat type shady figure, but by the release of Final Fantasy VII. It was said that there was an entire genre of wonderful games being passed over for translation into the English language, one containing hours of engrossing gameplay – it was, of course, the console RPG, and amazingly it took videogame companies and the general public until the seventh title in one of Japan's most beloved series to realise that they were missing out big time.

Right from the get-go Final Fantasy grips stronger than any RPG released before or since. The opening sequence was a revelation. The camera pans through a gntty, industrial city. revealing an active populace. When the camera settles at a railway station, a train draws to a nalt and characters pile out; you then realise that you are in control – the guy with the spiky blond hair is at your command and something's going down. So do something. Now that's how to start an RPG – Final Fantasy VII has a sense of pace, and indeed scale, that subsequent chapters have failed to deliver.

The spilly blond guy is, of course, Cloud Strife, on ex-SOLDIER (an elite, hallowed rank of warrior) - or so he thinks. He's a bit loopy and he's having flashbacks and blackouts, which is all very manga. He's also freelancing for terrorist,

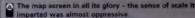
sorry, freedom fighter outfit AVALANCHE lead by the Mr T-esque Barrett, who communicates in jive-talk punctuated with expletives and much fist-shaking and body-quaking rage. The focus of his rage is the malevolent Shinra corporation, who, when not meddling with science and the planet's energy source, find time to kill Barrett's wife. We pity the fools.

The ragtag cast of characters that form your party is one of the most diverse, balanced and richly thought out of any collection of people gathered together to form an RPG team; Tifa, a bar hostess and AVALANCHE member and Aeris. golden child and flower seller, combine with Cloud to create quite a love triangle. Later recruits include the Native American/Lion hybrid Red XIII, rescued from a Shinra experiment, Vincent, a vampire-like figure, and Cait Sith, the most miserable turncoat since Judas. The final roster includes jungle ninja Yuffie and (of course) Cid, making his trademark appearance, grizzled as ever and on the verge of becoming the first man in space.

It's not just the megalomaniacs at Shinra that you lock horns with, either. There's the small matter of enigmatic nemesis Sephiroth - the embodiment of everything Cloud wishes he was, equally loopy, blessed with an even larger sword, but as twisted and destructive as evildoers come. The final battle between your party and









Not a very entertaining screenshot, but the Materia system
is both immediately accessible and satisfyingly intricate.



211 899



Sephiroth presents a battle between good and evil of Biblical proportions, as if the book of *Revelations* was a movie directed by Michael Bay. Sephiroth's character was so intimidating that when a face off with him loomed it imparted a sense of dread, a sense of 'I'm not ready to take him on' and a sense of utter fear.

However, when it comes to 'emotional content' there are few moments since the creation of the videogame that have spawned such widespread fervour and mourning as the death of Aeris at Sephiroth's blade. It speaks volumes about the quality of the game's storytelling that gamers genuinely cared that Aeris was killed. Grown men cried. She was, after all, a delicate soul – how could she not be? She sold flowers for a living in a desolate, colourless world. The moment she died firmly cemented Sephiroth as gaming's greatest villain.

But beneath the veneer and the story that sweeps you along are a number of wonderfully executed RPG staples. While Final Fantasy VII's battle system is undeniably basic, it is wonderfully complimented by a far more subtle and nuanced magic or 'Materia' system. Spells are facilitated by Materia – coloured baubles only harnessed when slotted into weapons or armour. It can also be combined with support

Materia, modifying a spell's effect. Perhaps the most infamous aspect, however, is the game's Summon Materia, where your team call forth beasts and gods of extreme violence to smash foes. The extravagance with which these sequences are animated was unprecedented at the time.

And believe it or not, that's just the bare bones of the game – the world map facilitated an

fledged strategy game in there at Fort Condor. Not only were these instances entertaining in their own right, they added depth and flavour to each location, with themselves featuring perfectly prerendered backgrounds such as the ruinous slums, the hazy glow of Wall Market with its accompanying Reggae background music, the neon lit Gold Saucer and the oppressive atmosphere of Nibelheim.

FEW MOMENTS HAVE SPAWNED SUCH WIDESPREAD FERVOUR AND MOURNING AS THE DEATH OF AERIS AT SEPHIROTH'S BLADE

awesome feeling of exploration, as well as exhibiting an excellent degree of proficiency with the PlayStation architecture, initially navigated on foot, then on Chocobo, hovercraft and then by airship, opening up new locations to explore. Chocobos could be bred or raced, Cloud could go on a date with Aeris, Tifa or even Barrett if you desired and even a brothel could be infiltrated with Cloud in drag. At key moments Cloud took to his trusty Hardy Daytona motorbike, went snowboarding or engaged in a gruelling squat battle in a gym populated by moustachioed bodybuilders. There's even a fully-

In terms of presentation, Final Fantasy VII excelled, its CGI cut-scenes elevating key plot revelations, the mood of each moment perfectly accentuated by musical compositions. Yet while the impact of its graphics have certainly faded and been surpassed by later instalments, the fact remains that the beauty of the characters and the unique insights into them afforded the player over the course of the game has meant that Final Fantasy VII remains the definitive Final Fantasy, the greatest RPG ever made, and, of course, my choice for the greatest PlayStation game of all time.



The final confrontation with Sephiroth is what the whole of the game is a preamble to.



This Church is a key location in the game – its interior is most tranquil.



Summoned beasts and spells are often



Make energy engulfs the planet at the game's conclusion as nature reasserts itself.

IT'S AS GOOD AS WE CAN MAKE IT, REALLY...

RELEASE LIST

GAME NAME

PUBLISHER

AME PUBLIS

JUNE

DRIV3R	ATARI
ETERNAL QUEST	ICE STORM
FOOTBALL GENERATION	ICE STORM
FORMULA ONE 2004	SONY
HACK VOL 2 - MUTATION	ATARI
HYPER STREET FIGHTER II	CAPCOM
INDY CAR 2005	CODEMASTERS
ONIMUSHA BLADE WARRIORS	CAPCOM
RED DEAD REVOLVER	ROCKSTAR
RETRO ARCADE	ICE STORM
ROLLERCOASTER WORLD	ICE STORM
SAMURAI JACK	SEGA
SAMURAI WARRIOR	EA
SHREK 2	ACTIVISION
SYPHON FILTER: THE OMEGA STRAIN	SONY
SMASH COURT TENNIS PRO TOURNAMENT 2	NAMCO
ULTIMATE MIND GAMES	ICE STORM
X-TREME SPEED	ICE STORM



JULY

ARMY MEN SARGE'S WAR	GLOBALSTAR
ATHENS 2004 OLYMPIC GAMES	SONY
CATWOMAN	EA
CLASSIFIED: THE SENTINEL CRISIS	GLOBALSTAR
COMBAT ELITE: WWII PARATROOPERS	ACCLAIM
MTV MUSIC GENERATOR 3	CODEMASTERS
ONIMUSHA 3	CAPCOM
RICHARD BURNS RALLY	SCI
SHELLSHOCK NAM 67	EIDOS
SPIDERMAN 2	ACTIVISION
TT SUPERBIKES	QVS
X-FILES: RESIST OR SERVE	VIVENDI



AUGUST

CHAMPIONS OF NORRATH: REALMS OF EVERQUEST

	ORIZOFI
HEADHUNTER: REDEMPTION	SEGA
NHL 2005	EA
VIETCONG PURPLE HAZE	GATHERING



SEPTEMBER

BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN	EA
DEF JAM 2 FIGHT FOR NEW YORK	EA
JUICED	ACCLAIM
KARAOKE STAGE	KONAM
MADDEN 2005	EA
RED STAR	ACCLAIM
RIBBIT KING	ATARI
SILENT HILL 4	KONAMI
STAR OCEAN 3	UBISOFT
TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2005	EA
WORMS FORTS: UNDER SIEGE	SEGA



OCTOBER

CRASH UNLIMITED	VIVENDI
DUKES OF HAZZARD: RETURN OF	
THE GENERAL LEE	UBISOFT
FIFA 2005	EA
GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS	ROCKSTAR
LEISURE SUIT LARRY: MAGNA CUM LAUDE	SIERRA
MOTOCROSS MANIA 3	GLOBALSTAR
NBA LIVE 2005	EA
OUTLAW GOLF 2	GLOBALSTAR
RESIDENT EVIL OUTBREAK	CAPCOM

GAME NAME PUBLISHER

SCALER	GLOBALSTAR
TOTAL CLUB MANAGER 2005	EA
TRIVIAL PURSUIT UNHINGED	ATARI
TY THE TASMANIAN TIGER 2	EA



NOVEMBER

100 BULLETS	ACCLAIM
GOLDENEYE 2	EA
LORD OF THE RINGS TRILOGY: THE THIRD AGE	EA
NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2	EA
ROCKY LEGENDS	UBISOFT
THE URBZ: SIMS IN THE CITY	EA



04 2004

FOX INTERACTIVE
VIVENDI
ACTIVISION
UBISOFT
FOX INTERACTIVE
VIVENDI
ACTIVISION
VIVENDI
BLIZZARD
ACTIVISION
ACTIVISION

PLEASE NOTE: While every effort has been made to ensure these dates are correct at the time of going to press, they are liable to change at short notice. So don't blame us if a game comes out late (or early; it does happen sometimes, you know). DIAWTM | CHANGING THE OIL ON THE HYPE MACHINE

PREVIEWS

The man with a gun. Along with 'fast car!', it's the staple diet of any worthy game publisher. We like man with gun. He's got a gun. And he's a loner – sorry – lone wolf. He's going to save the world and he's going to do it with his gun. Yes, he's a man and he makes us feel like men. This is good. Me Tarzan.

This month's preview section is a shrine to him. Worship him at our altar: Syphon Filter, Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow, Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy, Mercenaries, Paratroopers and Headhunter: Redemotion. These are the icons that we males kneel to and pray. Hallelujah! God be praised! The world can only be saved with a clip of 5.56 hollow points and a five o'clock shadow! Let the wars begin!



SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW

WE'LL EXCUSE GENERIC STUBBLE WHEN IT LOOKS THIS GOOD









ALPHAS AND BETAS



ALPHA

The latest screenshots of all the latest games and all the info on the games we have at the time. It's unlikely that we will have played the game at this point so we'll also be talking direct to the developers to bring you as much exclusive information as possible.

Just what is the difference between an Alpha and Beta preview?



BETA

This is where we give you our first verdict on games. There will be plenty of opinion about how the game's shaping up – we'll be very specific about what it's like to play, the game's successes and failings and you'll only get screenshots that show you what the game looks like when you're playing it.



ALPHA

First looks and Q&As

KILLER7

Cel-shading just got a whole lot seriouser.

METAL GEAR SOLID 3

Snake's fast becoming our favourite nature boy.

STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT

A long time ago, Lucas didn't suck the fat one.

MERCENARIES

LucasArts has been watching Kelly's Heroes.

38 JUICED

We're guessing this is one of those cool terms.

COMBAT ELITE: WWII PARATROOPERS

An RPG that isn't based on a fake war.

FARENHEIT

This looks cool. Trust us, that was a great pun.

THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS

They're all so scary - hor can it be for kids?



BETA

Hands on and up front

SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW

A wealth of stealth that'll improve your health.

PSI-OPS: THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY

You have to read our minds to see this caption

48 HEADHUNTER: REDEMPTION

Leeza X? Well, they could have called her Dido.

KILLER7

VITAL STATISTICS

PUBLISHER: Capcom **DEVELOPER:** Production Studio 4/Grasshopper Manufacturer Inc. WEB SITE: www.capcom-europe.com



TAKE NOTE:

- ead character Harman Smith has seven Iternate personalities the whackjob.
- Kun Lan turns people into zombies with his 'Heaven Smile'.
- Produced by Resident Evil luminaries Shinji Mikami and Hiroyuki Kobay

ANTICIPATION

FROM THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT YOU...

DEVIL MAY CRY

RESIDENT EVIL: CODE VERONICA

25%

BIZARRE LOVE TRIANGLE

You've got to hand it to the guys at Capcom they sure know how to conjure up a bizarre plot. As you know, our 'hero', in the loosest sense of the word, is Harman Smith a man with seven different personalities. One of these is a woman called Kaede Smith, Now, poor old Kaede is unaware of this and just happens to be in love with

Coyote and Dan - again.

two different characters within Harman's addled mind. Which means, if you've followed the ds, that Kaede is not only in love with herself twice over but completely

ware that she doesn't

really exist. Weirdo.

herself and doesn't exist at time. The po

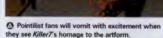
ere this good

oking we'd love ourselves



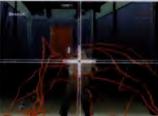








⚠ A lesser person would comment on the lack of attention to detail and textures. A lesser person mind.



"You are what you eat." If that's the case then this guy needs to lay off the jelly snakes.



⚠ Cel-shaded or otherwise, in reality or video-games – men with dangly earrings just look silly.

IT'S THE VAGUENESS THAT'S THE KILLER

etting hold of any concrete information on Killer7 is, we're willing to bet, substantially harder than squeezing blood from a particularly dry stone. Much to our disappointment. all that was on show at E3 was a trailer video and the tangle of 'facts' doing the rounds is as confused as the personality of Killer7's main protagonist.

Players are charged with the control of 60 year old Harman Smith - the man they call 'God Killer' - on a mission to kill one time friend Kun Lan, who happens to be blessed with a 'divine touch'. This is not the sort of thing boasted by male escorts, but in fact the ability to impart a

'Heaven Smile' on a victim - a manic grin that turns people into zombies. various incarnations of which will attempt to self destruct next to Harman in order to eliminate him. A further complication is the fact that the zombies are hard to spot with the naked eye, so their presence must be detected through the use of a scanner

even if he is equipped with an anti-tank rifle, is no recipe for an action-packed game, players will also take control of the embodiments of Harman's seven different personalities - Garcian, Dan, Mask, Coyote, Kevin, Kaede and Con.

Because playing as a lame old man,

Each has his or her (yes, Harman even has a female personality) own weapon of choice and distinctive ability - Garcian is clairvoyant, Dan can change bullet trajectories with his mind, Coyote can move through solid objects and Con has an acute sense of hearing. It doesn't exactly take a leap of faith to predict that each skill will have different ramifications for the player.

Up until recent screenshots were released by Capcom, it was difficult to fathom exactly how Killer7 would ultimately play, however, Capcom has clarified that the game includes both first-person and third-person playing styles, while key areas are switched between using text based prompts and a viewpoint shift from third- to first-person occurring whenever the player engages an enemy in combat. While this may sound limiting, there is obvious potential for sophisticated movie-like direction, an enticing prospect considering the unusual nature of the game's plot.

Additional tidbits of information include the revelation from the game's producers that the experience will be 'totally unique,' that additional weapons will be included and that the game will take roughly ten hours to complete. We're enthralled, but still a little baffled as to how it will all hang together.

AREAS ARE SWITCHED BETWEEN USING TEXT BASED PROMPTS AND A SHIFT FROM FIRST TO THIRD PERSON

'This game is the ultimate in style and action. Going places no game has gone before, Killer7 is set to thrill the world.' Capcom Press Release

WHAT THEY SAY









This screen really does test our Killer7 captioning abilities to their limits. And beyond.



⚠ We swear this guy was in Watchmen. Wonder if he'll drop any bad guys down a lift shaft?



You're not likely to see cel-shaded blood in bullet-time motion that often, are you?



A VIEW TO A KILL

It's not the services-tomental-illness-awareness plot or vagaries of how it'll play that's ensured that every new screenshot of Killer7 released has been lapped up by magazines, it's the game's heavy on the style quota visuals -Seventies-cop-show-meetscel-shading-meets-film-noir. The clean, bold lines of the cel-shaded protagonists are at times moodily emphasised by strong, one directional lighting and dramatic camera angles, making one thing for certain: Killer7 challenges the association of cel-shading and cute and cuddly graphics.



Ignore the tough looking dude and look at those trees – they're 2D – how's that for stylised?



Extreme angle shot, Seventies cop show hair, stealth-look polo neck and suit combo – that's too cool for words.

METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

VITAL STATISTICS

PUBLISHER: Konami DEVELOPER: In-house WEB SITE: www.konamijpn.com/products/ mas3/



TAKE NOTE:

- Features a unique camouflage system
- _ Jungle-based stealth adventure, promising a unprecedented gameplaying experience.
- Snake's back!

ANTICIPATION

FROM THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT YOU...

METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SONS OF LIBERTY
CASTLEVANIA

71% 81%

RELEASE DATE TBC

WHAT NOT

camouflage sets will be

boils down to matching like patterns, most

pretty quickly. As well as

the standard black, leaf and olive designs, there

are also tree bark and

tiger stripe designs (the latter for use when hiding

in rushes or tall grass).

While last summer's E3

gave us some dramatic

shots of Snake emerging

from a fiery water hole, it

may come as a surprise

camo, Konami has also included a snow print

final game will feature

environmental weather conditions. Current

ours also suggest that other prints may also become available for

some intense

that as well as the flame

outfit, suggesting that the

gamers will pick it up

initially daunting for many,

but as their effectiveness

TO WEAR
The choice of seven

METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

SNAKES USUALLY SHED THEIR SKIN. THIS ONE JUST CHANGES HIS TRACKSUIT

he tantalizing drip-feed of MGS3 information continues apace, as play was invited to see a Kojima-prepared Powerpoint presentation and a video highlighting exactly how Snake's (if indeed it is Snake) jungle camouflage feature will work. And then we visited a little event called E3 and had a crack at the one-level demo (a copy of which was stolen from a demo pod by a pair of youths at the show). As these screens demonstrate, Konami has included a surprisingly comprehensive system by which to enhance your stealth capabilities, promising to make this the strongest Metal Gear game yet (if Kojima can just avoid the metaphysical plot-twist confusion that destroyed the last act of Sons Of Liberty).

So what's with the number in the top right corner of these screens? Well, that is your camouflage index, with a score of 100 percent offering total invisibility to the eyes of MGS's identikit villains. The score is a reflection of several in-game factors (your posture, background environment, camouflage and face paint) and these aspects are all controllable throughout the game in order to keep as well hidden as possible. As a result, using the incorrect type of face paint or camouflage actually aids your discovery, as you are bound to stick out against the jungle like Michael Jackson at a pre-teen slumber party.

The text to the left of the index figure shows which type of camouflage and paint you are currently using, with seven different camo patterns currently on offer (see boxout). So basically, crouching down will automatically give you an invisibility index score of 65 percent, and this figure will be either improved upon or lessened depending on the clothing and make-up used to accompany the position (wearing

black face paint while hidden in bright, leafy foliage is a no-no, and from first impressions, we would imagine that the fire camo is practically useless without the presence of some covering flames).

Playing the demo itself was a high priority for play** at E3. We felt right at home immediately – if you've played MGS or MGS2 you'll know exactly what to do. Creeping through the jungle was never so much fun, though there were an awful lot of cut-scenes...

Of course, Konami has always been less than forthcoming when it comes to the inner workings of new Metal Gear Solid titles, but as the information filters through and as we get our hands on various pieces of demo and preview code, we're gradually piecing together a fuller picture of what the game holds. What we really want to see now is what lies beyond the jungle...



Snow print can be useful to add a bit of water camouflage although it's not perfect.



Expect a range of 'Where's Snake' picture books to follow. Or not.



Of course, murder is still acceptable if you are wellhidden enough.





Black camo is pretty conspicuous against anything other than shadow...



...so the black make-up will be of little help in keeping you out of sight...





...of course, fire shouldn't help you here, but surprisingly, it doesn't make you more visible...



...while tree bark camo with woodland paint is five percent better, with an index of 50 percent.

WHAT WE SAY >>

SNAKE WAS SO WELL CAMOUFLAGED THAT IT LITERALLY BECAME HARD TO SPOT HIM WITH THE NAKED EYE...

"Snake Eater's lush locale can be used to Snake's advantage, and the free-roaming gameplay allows the player to approach problems laterally." Konami Press Release

WHAT THEY SAY









Standing doesn't offer much protection at the best of times, and that camo isn't helping.





...but the snow print, with at least a bit of green striping, will bring your index up to 25 percent.
 Tiger stripe seems to catch the light less than the snow, but actually hides you a little less...
 ...while this standing, treebark ensemble actually gives a negative camouflage index of -5.



DONT **EVEN** BREATHE

Although previous Snake Eater footage has focussed upon clever ways to use the environment (knocking a homet's nest onto an unsuspecting guard, popping out of a river before shooting an enemy), the video demonstration witnessed by play" didn't feature one single round being fired, or any guards being maimed or killed. Frankly, it was all about the stealth, to the extent that Snake donned an alligator's skin to disguise himself and scare away any local human threat! The use of camouflage also heightened the varied effect of the uneven floor surfaces Konami has been keen to highlight, as well as the differing sound effects emitted by moving over the game's various ground coverings.



Your body may be hidden adequately, but those badniks will still see your face.



Unfortunately, the green-and-brown MGS3 may not suit



Of course, the hidey-seeky element of jungle warfare extends up the trees too.

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT

VITAL STATISTICS GENRE

PUBLISHER: Pandemic Studios
DEVELOPER: LucasArts WEB SITE: www.lucasarts.com

SHOOT-

TAKE NOTE:

- Supports 16 players online or up to 32 via LAN.
- Features locations from both classic and Attack Of The Clones eras.
- Fight on foot, from the cockpit of an X-Wing, speeder or an AT-ST.

ANTICIPATION

FROM THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT YOU...

STAR WARS: CLONE WARS

78% ARMY MEN RTS



THESE ARE THE DROIDS YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

Whereas a dead droid is just a pile of scrap metal, the droideka (destroyer droid) is pretty tricky to get the better of. While it may be slow to waddle around on its spindly legs in attack mode, its rate of fire is unrelenting with the potential for decimating enemy troops extremely high. It's also capable of rolling itself into a sphere for high-speed negotiation of the battlefield. A similar amount of thought has gone into balancing the other troops across the board and pitching one against the other will certainly be intriguing.



A teeny-weeny droideka here

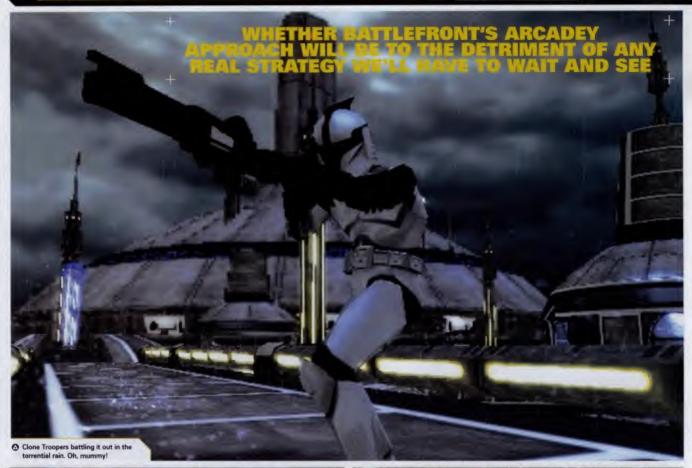
one of the most powerful
player controllable units.



And here's a bog standard battle droid. Roger, roger and all that.



Here's more mechanical nsense, but it's Star Wars so, naturally, we're excited









⚠ "And they said we'd never be back after Jedi and that crappy cartoon. Hahahaha!! Idiots."



♠ The landscapes need to be expansive and filled with action. So far, so good.





WHAT WE SAY >>
THROW IN THE ABILITY TO PILOT X-WINGS WITH
PLAYER-CONTROLLED WINGMEN AND THE SCOPE OF
BATTLEFRONT'S SKIRMISHES BECOMES APPARENT

"Star Wars Battlefront is a multiplayer action game that will put fans and gamers in the heat of the action as they relive all of the epic Star Wars battles" LucasArts press release

WHAT THEY SAY

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT

NO PARAPHRASING STAR WARS, NO PARAPHRASING STAR WARS...

ith games like SOCOM and. ahem, SOCOM II leading the online charge and anything with a few Star Wars characters bunged on guaranteed to shift a few units, merging the two styles of game together is a nobrained money-spinner. And that's pretty much what Star Wars Battlefront does. However, just because the idea is so obvious you've probably remarked to your mates about how much fun it would be to play an online Star Wars shoot-'emup, doesn't mean that developer Pandemic Studios has just slapped a load of Star Wars textures on an existing title and shoved it out the door at hyperspace speeds. No. Instead, Pandemic has poured a little bit more

care over Battlefront, ensuring that it includes the right mix of units, vehicles, locations and accessibility to appeal to players that would have little desire to play an online shoot-'em-up if it didn't feature such an evocative license.

Battlefront takes a scattergun approach to the Star Wars universe, offering both classic and Clone Wars eras to battle in, each featuring a different set of opposing sides – the Rebel Alliance and Galactic Empire, and the Republic Clone Army and Separatist Battle Droid Army respectively. It's Light Vs Dark and Good Vs Evil, but, fittingly for a game that can boast as many as 32 players simultaneously, it views the war from the point of view of the

minions - everyday foot soldiers or cannon fodder. It's a good way to settle the problems presented by force abilities and the balancing that such things would involve, so instead of picking from Han or Luke at the beginning of a classic-era, light side battle, you choose from the likes of an X-Wing pilot, a no-name weapons specialist or a random wookie. Equally with the dark side, you would choose from assorted stormtroopers, including one equipped with a jet pack for the ultimate in battlefield mobility. If you discount the vehicles, that is. Throw in the ability to pilot X-Wings, AT-STs and speeder bikes with player-controlled wingmen and gunners and both the scale and scope of Battlefront's skirmishes becomes apparent.

Another twist is the ability to unlock various effects to aid your side in battle, including a certain Mr Vader to cut a swathe through those rebel scum. The online structure will see players compete to takeover as many planets as possible including Hoth, Geonosis, Yavin, Tatooine and Naboo.

Whether Battlefront's arcadey approach will be to the detriment of any real strategy, we'll have to wait and see. It's got the Force all right, we just don't know how much.







A He might have a gun, but those pantaloons do ruin his hard man image.



Oh, come on – as if Stormtroopers could ever actually shoot anything.



♠ Stormtroopers? Check. Jedi environment? Check. Odd looking green man-thing? Check.



⚠ Left 'trooper had heard right 'trooper say something about his momma.

FUNNY LITTLE FELLAS

Just to add an extra splash of authenticity. Pandemic has incorporated a few native species for some of the planets, which give aid to, or hinder your side, depending on whether you're on the side of piety or wickedness. Ewoks attack stormtroopers as little teddy bears are wont to do when battling on Endor, while Jawas and Sand people pop up from time to time to cause a nuisance of themselves on their turf.



We believe 'Beecha wowwa' is the Ewok vernacular for this particular screenshot.



A sight that will please many Star Wars fans. And by 'many', we mean 'alt'.



Incredibly, people still blam the Ewoks for *Jedi*, rather than Lucas himself.

MERCENARIES

VITAL STATISTICS

PUBLISHER: Lucas Arts
DEVELOPER: Pandemic
WEB SITE:
www.lucasarts.com



TAKE NOTE:

_ Features the Havok physics engine of Max Payne 2 fame.

Set in North Korea, a country that features in Bush's Axis Of Evil.

_Over 30 weapons for you to use.

ANTICIPATION

FROM THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT YOU...

STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS

ARMY MEN: RTS

93% 85%



GETTING UP TO GET DOWN

Mercenaries gives you a wide variety of environments to play in, each with their best heel planted firmly in reality. You can move around on foot, in tank or helicopter and dominate the battle space anyway you see fit, even if you wish to clamber to the top of a bridge and hide out with a purse full of grenades. Games that feature such

freedom often fall down by

If you had a tank, you could

and crush his house

just like in Palestine

feeling empty, but
Mercenaries is packed
with detail and stitched
together with Havok. It's
bloody ace.







 James had a habit of playing anything long, hard and metallic like a didgeridoo.



⚠ How very darling! This soldier has a pink bandana



A He had spoken to his gardner about sloppy workmanship before, now it was time to take action.



Helicopter and the Havok physics engine together as God himself intended.

MERCENARIES

KILL A MAN FOR MONEY AND YOU'RE A HERO, LOVE HIM AND YOU'RE A PROSTITUTE - GO FIGURE

II o, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyses needed efforts to convert retreat into advance." Franklin D. Roosevelt said that during his inaugural address in 1933. Poor sod never new he'd be guoted in the indent for Pandemic Studios. Obviously what they should have said was "We have nothing to fear but another insulting Star Wars title." We're thinking Clone Wars here. If you've played it, you may, like us, have been amused by the "nothing to fear..." quote that was swiftly followed by a game that you really should. Luckily the videogame industry is not an

environment plagued by natural laws and it is quite possible for any studio to change its spots by just launching one game.

Thankfully, there is nothing here to indicate that *Mercenaries* is destined to be as much as a ramshackle experience as *Clone Wars*, especially when you consider the promise that's riding shotgun with these screenshots.

Set in North Korea where a coup has flushed the country into a state of militarised panic, you play a lone mercenary type who is tasked to track down fifty-two fugitives of the old members of the old regime before they can launch a nuclear attack. Fifty-two to capture, fifty-two levels, fifty-two cards in a deck, each one representing a wanted man – just like in

Gulf War II. Modern combat may inspire this game's conflicts but it certainly doesn't dictate it as you can choose alliances between rival factions and pilot or drive more than twenty-two ground and air vehicles. You also have access to more than thirty weapons that the press release describes as "deadly" and we should hope so too.

All this posturing has been given the gift of a realistic physics courtesy of the very same Havok engine that made *Max Payne* 2 so weighty. Havok's proven great for ragdoll and flying crates, but here it will actually destroy buildings. Marvellous.

Now Mercenaries' freedom of violent expression may sound all well and dandy but it could so easily be Clone Wars II – a clanging set of tin cans of a game whose ideas stand out far less than their astounding lack of cohesion, although this is looking increasingly unlikely with Pandemic seemingly getting its colonic-refuse together. ■

other hobby gets incorporated into a game.

ng on bridges, feelig

HAVOK'S GREAT FOR RAGDOLL AND FLYING CRATES BUT HERE IT WILL DESTROY BUILDINGS

WHAT WE SAY >> REALISTIC PHYSICS COURTESY OF THE VERY SAME HAVOK ENGINE THAT MADE MAX PAYNE 2 SO WEIGHTY

"With Mercenaries, if you can see it, you can steal it, use it or blow it up." Lucas Arts, Press Release

WHAT THEY SAY







BIG **GUNS**

Nothing short of total war. By swapping between vehicles and weapon systems you must constantly shift. your strategy to fit the situation. This scene of destruction details an Anti-Aircraft gun in the distance - perfect for taking down airborne invaders. We've just read those sentences back and we're getting ourselves excited. Is it right to have a love for a piece of military hardware? Can we get a 'hell yeah'?



Use cover to hide from helicopters and get on that big 88.



⚠ Young Jimmy never did really understand the whole 'Let's go out and get tanked' thing.





☼ To save on any your left/my right confusion, they decided to blow both sides up simultaneously.
☼ War. What is it good for? Videogames and the West's economy apparently.



Lighting farts had all of a sudden been taken to the next level.

JUICED

VITAL STATISTICS

PUBLISHER: Acclaim DEVELOPER: Juice Games WEB SITE: www.juicegames.com GENRE

» RACING

T x 1-2

TAKE NOTE:

_Ability to build racing crews that work together as a team to win races.

_Hundreds of authentic aftermarket parts from leading manufacturers.

More than 50 licensed vehicles.

ANTICIPATION

FROM THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT YOU...

Juiced is Juice Games' first non-mobile phone related game.



BLINGIN' OR MINGIN'?

Some would just be happy with a bus pass, but there's an evergrowing number of you out there who aren't happy unless they have a car with a spoiler the size of the GWB. For those of you reading who were excited by the last sentence, then Juiced is for you. Offering an unprecedented level of automobile altering. Juiced will enable the player to change his car of choice from the colour right down to the necessary upgrades needed for street success. These will be available for purchase on the aftermarket, with parts coming from manufacturers such as APEXi. Blingin'!



The race isn't really won on the track, it's won in the garage. Apparently.



Rumours are abound that the player will be able to 'up' their car's level of 'shine'.



By the end of your fiddling you should be well able to bling your way to victory.





The tracks look to have some extremely well-textured surfaces.







⚠ The speedometer display does look fairly bland against the otherwise exciting visuals.

JUCED

THE FRENCH FOR VAVAVOOM? JUS, APPARENTLY

n real life, cars probably don't look as good as this. Playing Juiced at E3 was a minor revelation. Featuring a semi-cell-shaded look, Acclaim's new racer doesn't just have the looks though. Amongst all the now *de rigeur* customisation options are some serious performance mods. But let's go back a step first.

The red car and the blue car had a race.

ever tire of this caption. Eve

Despite its mediocrity, Need For Speed Underground sold well. So well that it has given developers and publishers alike the idea that there is a market for such a rude-boy appeasing, street-racing sub-genre. Enter Juiced, a game that looks set to attach itself to this newest of bandwagons with all the gusto of a joy-rider in Detroit. With over 50 licensed cars, an incredible amount of upgrade options and multiple gameplay modes, Juiced's numbers

alone will have *The Fast And The Furious* wannabes queuing up like 13 year old girls waiting for a Guy Sebastian concert.

Looking like it's got more pizzazz than a Gene Kelly routine, *Juiced* seems unlikely to disappoint in the graphics souls for space-wars in your home galaxy, racing games are linear. They have to be – such is the nature of a racetrack – and that's fair enough, so when a game like *Juiced* purports to actually be a non-linear racing game we get slightly curious. As it turns out, the racetracks *will* be linear but the rest of the game won't be. Aspects of the game such as building characters, achieving notoriety and winning some bad guy's bucks will apparently bring with them said non-linear gameplay. Just exactly how they will, we're not sure. Yet.

Online racing is what the kids are all about these days though, and this is something that *Juiced* is prepared to deliver by the trunk load. Aside from the

ONLINE RACING IS WHERE IT'S AT AND THIS IS SOMETHING THAT JUICED IS PREPARED TO DELIVER BY THE TRUNK LOAD

stakes come autumn but as Juice Games is keen to point out, with *Juiced* "style comes in a close second to speed" alluding to the fact that there's a lot more to this title than good physics, pretty pictures and oil changes.

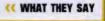
For those of you who are merely visiting this planet on a reconnaissance mission before your kind harvest our what-should-be-standard head-to-head online play, *Juiced* will actually give players the opportunity to develop their own racing crews through online communities with each member helping the other to be a lot more Vin Diesel than Paul Walker, which all makes this one a racing game we're going to keep at least one of our collective eyes on.

WHAT WE SAY >>>

THIS ONE'S CERTAINLY A RACING GAME WE'RE GOING TO KEEP AT LEAST ONE OF OUR COLLECTIVE EYES ON

"Juiced will give players the opportunity to go from artist to overdrive and test their mettle online."

Acclaim Press Release









⚠ The racetrack/city streets look nice and broad, inviting lots of overtaking.



Presumably this will be the sort of car you start the game with. It is, after all, crap.



The cityscapes are looking impressive and should add to the atmosphere a great deal.



Thankfully, not all of the racing will be a nocturnal activity, like in certain, other games.



FROM ONLY \$100 ON THE ROAD

Juiced has some stiff competition in such an increasingly numbersorientated genre, but by the looks of things it's gone all out to give itself the edge. 'How has it done this?' you ask. 'By having bigger numbers, we cry. The most exciting of these lists, though, is probably the one that features more than 50 licensed vehicles. This particularly stellar list includes automobiles from motoring giants such as Toyota, Honda, Nissan, Dodge, Ford, Mazda Mitsubishi, Pontiac, Holden, Volkswagen, Fiat, Renault, Subaru, Peugeot and Chevrolet. Awesome.



The Toyota Supra looks to be the car that will appeal to all spoiler-lovers.



The Toyota Celica looks sleek, which sounds like Celica. So it makes sense



The MR2 comes with shock absorbers. Hopefully, that means for colour choice.

COMBAT ELITE: WWII PARATROOPERS

VITAL STATISTICS

PUBLISHER: Acclaim
DEVELOPER:
BattleBorne Entertainment
WEB SITE:
www.combatelitegame.com

GENRE
ACTION
» ADVENTURE

NO. PLAYERS

TAKE NOTE:

_Developer BattleBorne includes former members of the *Baldur's Gate, Fallout* 2 and *Ghost Recon* teams

_Includes two-player co-operative mode.

_Recreates famous battles such as D-Day and Bastogne.



FROM THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT YOU...

This is BattleBorne's first game on PS2, or any other format for that matter.

RELEASE DATE JULY 2004

MAKING UP THE NUMBERS

If you want lovalty edience or a player's attention, generous rewards are where it's at. Look at the RPG genre many players are willing to comb even the most barren landscapes on the off chance that a sword of greater smiting proficiency lies hidden. According to Producer Eric DeMilt it's the reason for Combat Elite's emphasis on characte development, "Some of the game's elements such as the skill system, weapon pickups, and rank rewards are commonly seen in RPGs. We are using these elements because we feel it is important to reward the player and give them choices for their particular style of play.



Interacting with others will give a real feeling of immersion into the game's world.



Base RPG elements such as inventories will be common place throughout.



Equipping your sky-diving hero will demand some tactical thinking.

COMBAT ELITE: WWII PARATROOPERS

YOUR CHANCE TO GO BEHIND ENEMY LINES

he sheer number of war games out there means that before long we'll have conceivably played through every significant battle and minor skirmish of every major war from either a first-person or third-person perspective. Finding a new angle is obviously increasingly tricky, however, that hasn't stopped BattleBorne from setting their first PS2 game in WWII. Combat Elite: WWII Paratroopers, as the name less than subtlety gives away, is the paratroopers' story, with players taking part in some rather notable conflicts including those parachute-happy regiments.

Instead of taking a standard third or firstperson shooter approach though, BattleBorne has drawn inspiration from the Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance and Fallout titles that key members of the development team previously worked on, creating something of an action RPG-cum-war game. As you can see from the screenshots, the action is viewed from an elevated overhead perspective, and from the early build we've seen, looks crisper and more detailed than Fallout: Brotherhood Of Steel.

Combat Elite exudes that behind-enemylines feel, thanks in no small part to the fact that it recreates the likes of D-Day, Operation Market Garden and the defence of Bastogne. D-Day will be familiar to most thanks to the opening level of Medal Of Honor Frontline. Operation Market Garden and the defence of Bastogne, less so. So just to fill you in, Operation Market Garden consisted of thousands of paratroopers descending behind enemy lines to secure a series of bridges in Holland. The defence of Bastogne on the other hand, was conducted by light-infantry division: the 101st Airborne who defeated a superior armed German corps. What this means in terms of gameplay is that you should expect to be heavily outnumbered, which

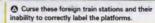
ties in beautifully with the character development and levelling up ethos of the *Baldur's Gate* and *Fallout* titles, which *Combat Elite* draws heavy inspiration from. Players will start out as a lowly Private with a puny punch, a lone rifle and very limited ammo, however, drilling the enemy full of bullet holes will be rewarded with experience points that can be spent on new abilities.

On top of simplistic and user-friendly controls and a cooperative two-player mode, Combat Elite's obvious advantage over Fallout and Baldur's Gate is its historical setting. Ultimately Combat Elite's success will boil down to whether it genuinely feels like a WWII game and not just an action RPG with WWII graphics bolted on. It was hard to make a definitive judgment from our limited play time at E3 but it's looking good and we sincerely hope it's the former.



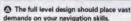


by had painted their floors to look like grass











The gritty look of the game will certainly encourage some pretty cautious adventuring.

WHAT WE SAY >>

ULTIMATELY COMBAT ELITE'S SUCCESS WILL BOIL DOWN TO WHETHER IT GENUINELY FEELS LIKE A WWII GAME AND NOT AN ACTION RPG WITH WWII GRAPHICS BOLTED ON

"Combat Elite: WWII Paratroopers possesses the technology, graphics and gameplay to appeal to a broad global market." Rod Cousens, CEO Acclaim

WHAT THEY SAY











⚠ There's nothing quite like a game that features a top-notch Persian rug.



(A) We shall fight them on the seas, beaches and,



O play" does love WWII – we just never get tired of killing Nazis.
O Wow. A snow level that actually has snow that looks like snow. Amazing.







BATTLEBORNE ENTERTAINMENT

A game such as Co Elite is screaming out fo an online mode. Will

There is no online play planned for this version of Combat Elite. It is certainly something we are looking at for the sequel. You can take a look at Champions Of Norrath if you want to get a look at some of the engine's online capabilities. We are very excited about looking into this aspect of the game.

How does the co-op play work in terms of a second player have to have played the game in order to introduce a wered up character, or is this something that has been addressed?

Two-player co-op works almost identically to single player. Each character starts out the game with certain equipment (based on who you choose), players must decide who gets what weapons, ammo and health as they find them playing through the game. It's pretty fun to run ahead of your friend and steal all his health and ammo pickups Since we're not a pure RPG we do not support the importation of characters created in a single player game to a co-op game.

the game that can be No not in this version. You

can blow them up, but you can't take them for a ride.

work considering the fixed and somewhat limited point of view?
From a functionality point of view, the Al system is very similar to that of most combat games. NPCs have paths, cover points, teams, behaviours, and goals/priorities allowing us to set up a wide variety of battle scenarios. The enemy and allied Al actually work quite well in the CE POV. In many ways it's a lot better than a first-person view since you can see things going on all around you.

FAHRENHEIT: THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

VITAL STATISTICS

PUBLISHER: VU Games
DEVELOPER: Quantic Dream
WEB SITE:
www.fahrenheitgame.com

GENRE

» ADVENTURE

TAKE NOTE:

- _Intriguing murder mystery.
- _ Multiple controllable characters.
- Impressive new 3D engine.



FROM THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT YOU...

OMIKRON: THE NOMAD SOUL

PG

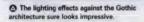


RELEASE DATE -

CHILL OUT? US?

Since it released Omlkron The Nomad Soul in 1999 you could be forgiven for thinking Quantic Dream has been resting on its laurels, but this could not be further from the truth. The developer has actually spent the time developing its new graphics engine, known as ICE (for which fifteen people slaved essly for over eighteen months), as well as a physical engine and the developer's very own Al routines. Fahrenheit will be the first title to be developed using these new tools and is said to offer impressive shadowcasting through specular lighting, including realtime self-shadowing on controllable characters. Sounds swanky.









 Moody lighting will add to the intrigue of the Vivendi title



⚠ This is Carla Valenti, just one of several





FAHRENHEIT: THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

WE SAID, WHAT'S COOLER THAN BEING COOL?

n a near-future New York, ravaged by cold and isolated by snowdrifts, apparently 'normal' citizens are randomly killing total strangers.

Inexplicably, despite there being no link between murderers and victims, all the crimes seem to share the same modus

operandi. So reads the premise for Quantic Dreams' Fahrenheit, a sleuthing adventure which promises to define "a whole new gender of game type". How will it do this exactly? Well, it seems that the Fahrenheit game engine will require the gamer to switch between control of multiple players

in order to unravel the mystery, including Lucas Kane (a suspect himself, having just murdered a man in a restaurant men's room) as well as police inspectors Carla Valenti and Tyler Miles.

The difference Quantic Dream promises over similarly-themed adventure titles however, is that the actions of the player when in control of one character will have a direct effect upon the situational response and actions of a different player later on − in short, the game's plot will react according to how you play the game. Rumours that Fahrenheit will ship chapter-by-chapter (possibly as an online-purchased title) have proved to be false, but on the strength of these shots we're hoping to be impressed by Quantic's self-developed ICE graphics engine at the very least. ■









TIM BURTON'S THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS

VITAL STATISTICS

PUBLISHER: Buena Vista DEVELOPER: Capcom WEB SITE: www.capcom-europe.com



TAKE NOTE:

- License still popular despite being a decade on from the film's release.
- Fast-paced platforming fun.
- Whether or not the songs will be included is still unconfirmed.



FROM THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT YOU...

MAXIMO VS THE ARMY OF ZIN

85% 84%



Fifteen years of Art school between us and we still can't draw stick-men this well.



⚠ The environments retain the cold quirkiness that served the film so delightfully.



⚠ The game does feature a rather mouthy bunch of characters.



The film was actually based on a vision Tim Burton had after eating a rotten pumpkin.





THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS

BOYS AND GIRLS OF EVERY AGE, WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO SEE SOMETHING STRANGE?

en years might seem like a long time between a film's cinema release and its licensed game tie-in but in truth, The Nightmare Before Christmas merchandise wagon never really picked up speed until a few years later anyway. Now you can get all kinds of goodies, from books to action figures. But then, with Rockstar developing The Warriors and EA having got its hands on The Godfather, it

would seem that a classic license is never too dated to milk it for a few more of your hard-earned dollars.

But enough with the cynical sideswipes (for now, at least), as on early evidence The Nightmare Before Christmas is looking to be a surprisingly sophisticated adventure, in which Pumpkin King Jack Skellington must take on that evil sack-of-bugs named Oogie Boogie for the sake of

Hallowe'en Town. Nearly all the film's minisets have been rendered in painstaking detail, and the speed and flow of Jack's gestures and expressions manage to effortlessly recall the unbridled joy of the movie. So providing that Capcom doesn't take too many liberties with the license, this should be one beloved property that doesn't get the short thrift when it comes to videogame translation.











RELEASE DATE TBA 2004 «

MASTER OF FRIGHT, DEMON OF LIGHT

Jack Skellington is the Pumpkin King, and any readers familiar with his adventure in Christmas Town will already know what a formidable character he is, despite an esoteric, stick-thin posture. Indeed, with a wave of his hand and a well-placed moan he has wept the very bravest off their feet (or so he sang) At no point in the film did lack wield some sort of whip-cum-lariat/rubber bogey monster-slaying device in order to assert his authority over his domain, Frankly, this worries us slightly, but we're prepared to give the benefit of the doubt until we see the weapon in full platforming action



The whip-bogey didn't feature in the film but it certainly doesn't feel tonal out of place.



Despite the whip, it seems very few liberties have been

D

RELEASE DATE

SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW

VITAL STATISTICS
PUBLISHER: Ubisoft
DEVELOPER: In-house
WEB SITE: www.splintercel.com

ACTION

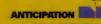
ADVENTURE

NO. PLAYERS

TAKE NOTE:

- Refined control system enabling a smoother operation all round.
- New moves for Sam Fisher because an old dog can learn new if needless, tricks...

Music by Lalo 'Dirty Harry' Schifrin



FROM THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT YOU.

SPLINTER CELL
RAINBOW SIX 3

807% 87%



Multiplayer: hacking a door lock will trigger an alarm so get ready to hide back in the shadows



Most games keep you away from the main villain until the end. This is level one, and there he is.



O not adjust your magazine, these heat effects are intentional and pretty as a young girl's smile.



Opn't shoot an extinguisher or you'll get blinded by foam. Hey, it's just like Saturday morning kids-TV

INIMENSLEY TALENTED, ARGENTINIAN BORN PIANIST...

Starsky And Hutch, Enter The Dragon, Mission: Impossible, Dirty Harry four films that shy away from using more than one adjective noun/verb noun combinations. And film's that have had their music scored by Lalo Schifrin. Pandora Tomorrow's musical score is simply onderful and manages to sound modern while still having a classical edge. One level sees you in a sewer as water drips around you. As you inding like an effect and become part of the music - its natural beat becoming the beat for something epic



Here's Lalo Schiffin. No doubt he's thinking of a score to this screenshot.

SPLINTER CELL: PAN

A TOAST TO GOOD STEALTH

rouching in a cape of shadow, pistol raised, silent and deadly. Crosshairs scale down, denoting the accuracy of the shot. The target's head ready for a bullet. Squeeze the trigger. Phut! Miss Certain members of play**s team found the original Splinter Cell to be thirsty for some accuracy in the weapons department. Pandora Tomorrow improves on the original in many ways and not least because Sam Fisher's sidearm comes with a laser sight that you can toggle. It's deadly. As in life, where the red dot illuminates, a bullet would follow.

So why not just uses the laser sight all the time if aiming by eye takes about 38 shots too many? Because the enemy can see the sparkling crimson dot. Should it flick across a surface in front of them they'll see it — and depending on their alert status, they will react to it. You can use this to your advantage. You can use the light to distract them, then move by or kill 'em while they're all confused. Lovely. It's just lovely.

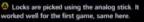
Hands-on testing, that's what we've got here and what we can tell you straight off is that the control system has been greatly improved while the graphics have had a polish. Pandora Tomorrow – it's like the first game but better! No, you're right – that would make an awful advert. But at least the advert would be totally accurate. Where the original often felt awkward to control we now have something far more intuitive that makes for far smoother and slicker stealth action. You can click down on the analog sticks to make Sam Fisher look using binoculars and to get his back up against the wall while all weapon and system management has been rejigged to allow you to react quicker. There are other



New moves including a jump from the once static split-jump. He can also Whistle. Lalo Schiffrin is kewll









Night vision: this scene is in total darkness enabling you to confuse the enemy by whistling.



Lighting effects dominate and many a time you'll stop just to go, 'aw'. Grow up, you sap.



Binoculars now come as standard, giving you a
working first-person view any time you want.

DORA TOMORROW

new moves, but as with the first game, their implementation is somewhat limited. Before you could jump up and support yourself in mid -air by pressing your legs out against supporting walls. Now you can lean to one side and propel yourself up onto a ledge on the opposite wall. While we welcome the new addition to the split-jump we also note that you only need to use it twice to complete the game. This was always Splinter Cell's problem; it gives you moves that you seldom or never use. Sure, you can hang upside down from a cross beam with your gun aimed and ready, but you never need too. There's never those 'thank the Lord I can hang upside down!' moments. They don't happen. Still, you do look cool and sometimes that's enough.

When directing our attention to the improved visuals we noticed something that was true with the first game. This game looks beautiful and crisp with a great deal of definition and detail on display, but you'll only notice if you're not using night vision and you use night vision a lot. Often we'll find that the only time we turn it off is when we're reminded that we really should we paying respect to the title's graphics. Where the original's PS2

version looked slightly jaggier when compared to its Xbox mother, *Pandora*'s are smoother and far more comparable. It's a testament to the their quality that we only noticed major differences in quality when checking out thermal vision or condition's where the lighting technology is tested to the maximum. Ubisoft Shanghai has done us proud so we'll forgive

keeping in the shadows and disabling alarms and cameras you must get your spy to steal an item protected by the mercs. These mercs control more like standard first-person characters, the spies, like Sam Fisher. It should be a turkey shoot, but it isn't. Spies work well in darkness, mercs can only see what's lit by the tactical light on their assault

ANY GAME THAT HAS A MICROPHONE-BULLET DESERVES MAXIMUM ANTICIPATION

them for Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon and move onto some real changes.

Online multiplayer. Trust us – it really is the future. Pandora Tomorrow's multiplayer mode really is different. Instead of simply giving you the single player game where artificial intelligence is replaced by something more deadly, it gives you a whole new game of hide and seek. Only four players can play at once and they're spilt into two teams. One team play the spies, the other two take the triggers of mercenaries. The spies are designed for stealth, the mercenaries for a more direct approach and it's the difference between the character's skills that gives you your thrills. By

rifles, or than they can switch to motion detection mode where any difference in air pressure is highlighted on screen. If a spy moves slowly they're pretty much invisible, and they do have the added ability of night vision. Problem is that the mercenaries have a vision mode that detects electromagnetic energy. Switch on any electronic equipment and you'll light up as if you'd been drinking blue Ready Brek. It's this balancing of skills and abilities that makes the resultant game of cat and mouse so compelling. Hell, any game where you can shoot an enemy with a eavesdropping microphone-bullet deserves maximum anticipation.





DILATED PUPILS

dilated, you're either on or it's dark. You'll notice that when you travel from one, it will take a while for your eyes to adjust. with one eye closed just in case they see a flash totally goofed. They'll ays have one eye ready to see in almost total darkness. Splinter Cell 2's online multiplaver If you're a mercenary and you've been hunting for a take you a while to see property when you enter a snaces will look all the darker if juxtaposed The balancing of skills continues and we're more



Moving from light areas to dark will cause your eyes to adjust.

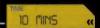


Just because you're in the dark doesn't mean they won't look with torches.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS



Graphics noticeably improved – controls are frickn' sweeeeet.



Level one is an 'on the job' training mission. No dumb ass obstacle courses this time.



Why it plays like the original – but in a sexier, more refined way.

PSI-OPS: THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY

VITAL STATISTICS

PUBLISHER: Midway **DEVELOPER:** In-house WER SITE:

www.psiopsgame.com

NO. PLAYERS » T. 1

TAKE NOTE:

- Uses the Havok 2 physics engine made famous by Max Payne 2.
- Fire actually spreads across surfaces like fire should.
- Four different Psi-powers.

ANTICIPATION

MORTAL KOMBAT: DEADLY ALLIANCE

SPYHUNTER 2

RELEASE DATE **SEPT 2004**

MIND OVER **MATTER**

At the core of Psi-Ops' gameplay are the excellent to the four directions on the d-pad, each one is limited to the amount of psi-power (think health bar) your character has. How you use them is up to vou - different powers could be used in different how you want to approach the game. For example, it might be a good idea to sess a guard and then use him to short out an ectrical floor before you walk on it, equally, you may opt to stand on a crate and then levitate it, taking yourself and the crate over the obstacle.







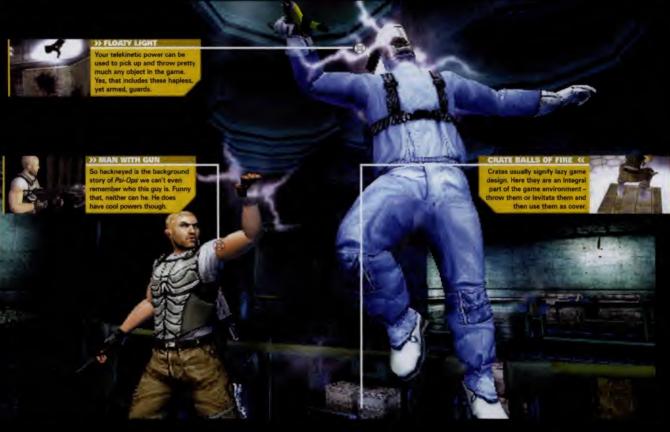




ost of the time, like you, our first







OPS: THE MINDGATE THINK OF A GAME, THINK OF ANY GAME

looking man with a gun (nice one) waving his hand around upposedly exercising his 'amazing' psychic powers. What a great concept for a game - it's bound to be rubbish! Even the game's original name, 'ESP-ionage' (word-play fans), was enough to make us choke on our breakfast flapjacks.

Good job that first impressions often turn out to be completely misplaced then, eh? Now we've played Psi-Ops we can tell you that, well, it's looking pretty damn good we know this because it makes us ask the

question: why has no one thought of doing this before?

The premise of Psi-Ops is pretty straightforward. You play a special agent (of the kind who has lost his memory) who has been highly trained in the arts of mind powers and as you progress through the game you regain (or remember, if you like) your powers. These are, specifically, shooting fire out of the hand, levitating (and throwing) objects and people, remote viewing and, best of all, mind control. These four, and the obligatory

Refreshingly open-ended gameplay that accommodates the USP well. The game looks lurvely.









shooting and stealth, form the basis for all gameplay in Psi-Ops.

Remote viewing enables you to see what's ahead of you through walls and doors and plan what you're going to do next. Shooting fire, well, enables you to set fire to things (indeed, fire will spread on combustible surfaces such as crates and humans). Levitation enables the movement of any object within a certain size, including barrels and enemies. Finally, mind control enables you to take control of an enemy and then use of the game could only be solved in the way they'd designed it. Not so. The choice, as they say, is entirely yours.

Each power encourages a different style of play - do you sneak up to a guard, possess him and then attempt to kill off his fellow guards knowing that if they discover you, they'll give your in-limbo body a good beasting? Do you lob explosive barrels in their direction, the resulting impact and explosion causing the whole troop to catch alight? Do you levitate the guards one by one, shooting

of a psionic meter- the more powerful the ability, the quicker the meter drops. It can be replenished by either (yawn) picking up the odd psi-power-up here and there or (more interestingly) by absorbing the psipower directly from corpses and the living. We'll have to wait and see as to exactly how this might or might not adversely affect the gameplay and ruin your fun with the psi-powers.

There's not much else wrong with Psi-Ops. The camera needs a bit of work - using the telekinesis psi-power switches the right analogue stick from camera control to object control - causing the camera to get stuck on corners and the like. Apart from that it's pretty sound. At this (fairly) early stage, the game hangs together well - there's plenty of chance for you to play with the powers, the physics engine is great, Psi-Ops has good level and character design and you can even kick the hell out of dead bodies (oh yes). Well, we're very pleasantly surprised.

Hey, this is play™, the magazine that's big enough to admit when it's wrong. From now on we'll be keeping a keen eye on Psi-Ops it could be the surprise hit of the year.

FROM NOW BE KEEPII

him to shoot other enemies, activate switches, take out electrified flooring or just simply to 'dispose' of himself. The latter is only possible if your victim is unaware of your presence, bringing in some much-needed (!) stealth elements.

What we had feared with Psi-Ops was that the use of each of these powers was to be dictated to the player by the game's designers. In other words, each puzzle or part them in the air as they squirm? Or do you indeed run in head first, shooting fire and bullets into the pack?

Your psionic powers can also be used to directly aid you - standing on a crate and then levitating it can be a method to traverse a gap in a bridge, for example, or as a shield against enemy fire. The scope of Psi-Ops is huge. Potentially. The only real problem we can see at this stage is the use



⚠ Excellent gameplay idea #2. Levitate gas cylinders, shoot them in mid air to kill enemie



A Because of Psi-Ops' Havok phys



Dead guys can be drain ed for a small a



Search the lockers for power ups health nacks and nsi-nower-replenishers. Woo-hool

PLAYTIME

Here's a good example of how much fun Psi-Ops physics engine makes the game. Included in the demo we play is this 'psychic playroom' full of crates stacked on top of barrels, explosives and mindless guards. WE NEVER TIRED OF THROWING THE GUARDS AROUND. Like life-size rag-dolls in the midst of a terrifying storm we were hurling them around, into setting them on fire and hurling them around, into crates, barrels... And all on PS2 - very, very





FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Good grief. Look at that loading screen.



Weeeeeee! We're in the practice room playing with a giant ball! Look at the physics, isn't it brilliant!



Okay enough play, time to get down to the serious business of, erm, playing. We're possessing guards burning stuff, throwing explosives all over the

D

HEADHUNTER: REDEMPTION

VITAL STATISTICS

PUBLISHER: SEGA DEVELOPER: Amuze WEB SITE: www.sega europe.com

GENRE ACTION » ADVENTURE

NO. PLAYERS

TAKE NOTE

- _ Two playable characters Leeza X and an aged Jack Wade.
- Orchestral Score from the awardwinning Richard Jacques.
- _ Jack still sounds like Clint Eastwood swallowing gravel.

FROM THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT YOU HEADHUNTER

RELEASE DATE AUTUMN 2004

NOTHING WITHOUT A WOMAN

bring about a crime-free society – even if it means utilising a little slave labour. Then on a routine mission, Jack kills the

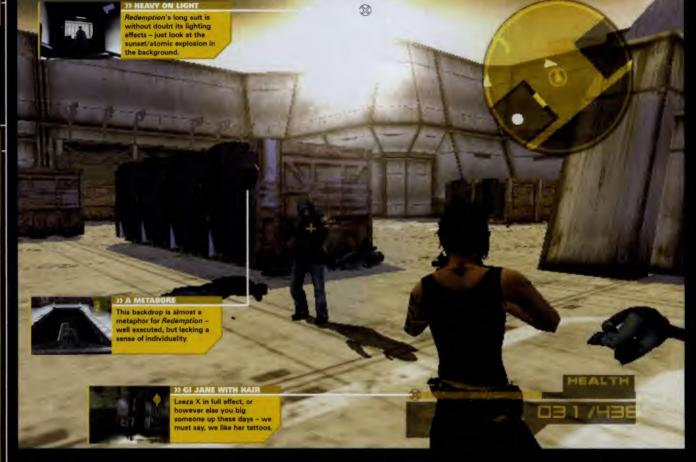
father of a six-year-old

the headstrong and sassy Leeza X. With an embittered ex-wife and a crime-fighting partner

Jack may well be in store for more than a

girl, a scared, vulnerable child that's later reintroduced to us as

OR A GIRL
Redemption takes place
twenty years after the
first. HeadHunter and a
lot's happened since
then. Firstly, poor old
Jack's son gets
snatched. Then his wife
Angela Stern promptly
leaves him and inherits
the family company
which she rules with an



HEADHUNTER: REDEMPTION

JACK WADE RETURNS, BUT IS IT A THIRD-PERSON SHOOTER TOO FAR?

ou've got to yourself one question:
Do I feel lucky?"
When it comes to predicting how
Amuze's HeadHunter: Redemption is going to
turn out we feel a little like the guy staring
the down the barrel of a Magnum .44
brandished by Dirty Harry himself, unsure of
whether the gravel-voiced cop has fired six
shots or only five.

"Well do ya, punk?" Not really, no. While the original HeadHunter successfully combined elements of Metal Gear Solid, Driver, Resident Evil and Robocop to create a distinctive and atmospheric adventure fronted by gaming's answer to Harry Calahan, Jack Wade, its sequel has scrapped the somewhat skittish, yet at times exciting, bike sections of the original and we're a little concerned that the series' zeitgeist cool has gone with it. At a time when Grand Theft Auto and Driv3r are the hot franchises and

Splinter Cell has raised the bar for stealth-based gameplay we feel more than a little apprehensive that Redemption is going to end up a little like Jack Wade himself – older, more grizzled and sporting a limp.

Emphasis is now firmly placed on the third-person action levels, which exude the same futuristic, dystopian feel as the first game and are interspersed with similar ironic media broadcasts, but while Amuze isn't quite whistling Hit The Road Jack, it is



Minority Report didn't exist, those mechanical spiders would be a new idea.



Stealth takes on a whole new perspective when you can see through walls.



Molding the gun reminded Leeza of what it felt like to love a man.



The range of high-tech weaponry on offer is enough to slake the thirst of any gun fetishist.

Will Leeza still be prepared to work for Jack when she discovers he killed her dad?

JACK OF ALL TRADES

- Aiming and scanning system show off a few innovations.
- Some rather nice lighting and particle effects in there.
- Features a large arsenal.









definitely gearing up our man for retirement or the knackers yard, as for much of *Redemption* you'll be getting to grips with a new heroine – the very So Solidly named Leeza X. Ms X behaves in a remarkably similar way to Jack, the difference between them being pretty much cosmetic – she sports a graceful kick animation, while Jack cracks jaws with a manly hook.

Thankfully there are a few slightly more pronounced innovations thrown in too. namely a refined aiming system and a scanning device, disguised as a pair of natty Oakley-style shades for identifying threats. switches and the like. The former development is a fresh expansion of traditional lock-on systems, but instead of snapping onto a potential victim with all the accuracy of an inhuman sniper, players have to take into account their distance from a target, angle and speed at which they're moving - running and firing wildly contributes to an erratically moving reticle. A more unhurried approach, however, provides less twitchy control, allowing for localised shots on different parts of the body, which of course, facilitates the ever-popular headshot.

It's the scanner, however, that has the potential to elevate HeadHunter above the crowd. An underground sewer section we played through - wait, it gets better, we promise - demonstrated how intrinsic if is for success. An early warning rumble through the DualShock revealed that a potential danger was nearby in a seemingly innocuous section of pipe. Throwing caution to the wind at this point would have resulted in Jack permanently losing the use of both his legs, unwittingly stepping on a senes of mines. Paying heed to the early alert and activating the scanner revealed the presence of the mines, which were safely disposed of from a distance. Actually, we're embellishing facts here - first time through, Jack met an untimely, mine-triggered demise, proving how essential the scanner is

The build of *Redemption* we played still had a little way to go before being complete — enemy Al was not fully functional, with enemy soldiers unable to cope with running up stairs without losing all cognitive ability. We also haven't been privy to witnessing many of the game's levels, however, rather disconcertingly, the few we have seen impart

a horrible feeling of déja vu for anyone that's played the original, with a Running Man-style TV show and rooftop boss showdown eerily familiar. Thankfully though, Redemption has an air of quality on a par with Hitman Contracts In fact, like the latest Hitman instalment, Redemption features similarly lovely lighting and particle effects, particularly evident in Jack's basement HQ where shafts of light reveal thick clouds of dust lingering in the air - locations are atmospheric all right. Speaking of which, Richard Jacques is once again on board to provide HeadHunter's musical score. probably meaning orchestras aplenty, but if it's one thing Mr Jacques can do it's add a touch of aural drama when needed.

There's no doubt that presentation wise Redemption is looking promising, however, with the likes of Vice City, Driv3r, Hitman Contracts and Splinter Cell all taking the third-person adventure in their own unique direction, Amuze's Jack of all trades approach—plenty of shooting, a touch of stealth, a few puzzles here and there—might end up spreading the innovation a little too thin across the board

"But I gots to know

Sadly we wonit know the contents of HeadHunter's barrel until we sit down with the finished code, but we're hoping there's a bullet left in there to surprise us.

BARRELS OF GUNS

When you're previewing a game set in a nearfuture metropolis and in depth the new aiming and scanning systems. there's only one thing left to talk about - the guns. And play would If it's one thing that's painfully obvious, it's that by ditching HeadHunter's bike sections. Amuze has left us with painfully little that's unique to talk about, which doesn't exactly bode well for the final game



T'S THE SCANNER, HOWEVER, THAT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO ELEVATE HEADHUNTER ABOVE THE CROWD



A There is no denying the wealth of visua panache to be found in Redemption.



⚠ That radar indicates the presence of three enemies. Admiring the rockface is a real mistake.



After killing men, Leeza X likes to mark the event by doing a cartwheel. Weeeeeeee!



Leeza X was hardly surprised at the size of Microsoft's latest videogames console.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS



Leeza X hey? Tragic name but she kicks like a mule.



That scanning's pretty useful you know – better than being blown limb from limb at any rate.



We've seen a few levels now and some of them seem very familiar indeed. Not good.





The Jak II graphics engine has been given a second state of the second s



The lightning feature is just one of the many effective gun upgrades available.



Naturally, Jak 3 continues the series' tradition of combining lots of different gameplay elements.

NAUGHTY DOG'S JAK AND DAXTER AND INSOMNIAC'S RATCHET & CLANK SERIES HAVE NEVER BEEN 'AVERAGE' JUMPING GAMES



As always, everything depicted in Ratchet & Clank is larger than life, and very, very shiny.



New for Ratchet 3 is the Line is to deflect and large and a second and



These bad guys are said to be the stupidest in the universe – so stupid, in fact, that they'll happily join a crusade to eradicate all life form the universe – including themselves.

THE PLAYERS

WHO ARE THE CREATIVE MINDS BEHIND JAK 3 AND RATCHET & CLANK 3?

NAME: JASON RUBIN TITLE: DEPARTING CEO NAUGHTY DOG

Jason created the Jak And Daxter franchise, though he admits to have felt like a fifth wheel in recent times, as the developer has expanded and developed around him. When announcing Jak 3, Rubin was keen to emphasise that this instalment belongs to Evan Wells and that his input has been merely supervisory this time around.



NAME: EVAN WELLS TITLE: GAME DIRECTOR NAUGHTY DOG

One of the most candid men in videogame development, Evan Wells has inherited the Jak franchise after five years of commitment to the property. Despite Jak 3 being the final part of the current trilogy, we will see Jak and Daxter in other games in the future, as Naughty Dog seeks to expand upon its universe even further.



NAME: BRIAN ALLGEIER TITLE: DESIGN DIRECTOR INSOMNIAC

Allgeier has been the controlling force behind Ratchet & Clank since the series began and has overseen the title's evolution (and its seven subsequent Game Of The Year awards for Locked And Loaded). A man who wears his work ethic on his sleeve, Allgeier is quick to relate the game's success back to Insomniac's independent roots.



he career of a platformadventure videogame character is often pretty much a one-note affair, throughout which the wheres and whys of each successive adventure are ignored by a developer in favour of mindless jumping for jumping's sake. You don't ask questions - there's a princess in peril, a civilization in chaos, a treasure to collect - and each generically-themed world becomes merely another obstacle ahead of ultimate gaming success. Hell, even Mario had to save Daisy from Donkey Kong and Bowser a few times before graduating from medical school and earning himself a driving license.

Just take a look yourself - for a console as pervasive as PlayStation2, there are actually very few triple-A platform licenses to choose from, with even such trustworthy luminaries as Tomb Raider and Castlevania unable to keep up with the expensive development chase. Sure, the environments have become prettier and larger, but there are very few games that have sustained a connection beyond their ability to make you chuckle or gasp sporadically - what do you really care to know about Whiplash's Spanx and Redmond, or even Lady Croft for that matter?

This lack of connection to character or narrative could account for why we've come to expect less and less from action/platform games in the last few years, and why a platform adventure with any special qualities stands out from the pack quite so

boldly. You certainly wouldn't expect to see the phrase 'narrative trilogy' or 'online and split-screen multiplayer' in any average platform franchise's grubby, yawnsome press release. But then, Naughty Dog's Jak And Daxter series and Insomniac's Ratchet & Clank franchise have never been 'average' jumping games – otherwise they certainly wouldn't have shifted over ten million units between them with their first two chapters.

As ongoing series, both titles are testament to Sony's continued pledge to support innovation, and from the display at the sumptuous London hotel where both games are being unveiled to play"'s freelance correspondent, you could be forgiven for thinking that the third instalments in both sagas are an inhouse development. In reality, Insomniac is one of only two independent developers in the current top fifty listing, while Naughty Dog created Crash Bandicoot for PSone and hasn't looked back since. Two very different pedigrees, for sure, but the goal of both companies remains the same to provide a gaming experience which cannot be obtained with any other PS2 title; it's a measure of both games' successes that Sony would choose to showcase Jak 3 and Ratchet & Clank 3 side by side, certain that neither one will be left holding the spotlight exclusively after curtain call.

Of course, fans who have followed either saga will be eager to discover >>>

JAK 3

VITAL STATISTICS

PUBLISHER: Sony DEVELOPER: Naughty Dog WER SITE: www.scea.com







ALPHA Jak 3 begins with Haven City being razed to the ground following all the Dark Eco chaos toward the end of Jak II. This allows Naughty Dog to place Jak and Daxter in the wasteland at the beginning of this new chapter. Here they are found by Damus, the

King of Spargus City - home of the 'forgotten ones', who each owe a life debt to the city for allowing them refuge from the desert elements. Spargus is an arena city, where banished Marauders fight for glory and sanctuary, and after only proving your worth in battle will Jak be accepted into the society. It is here that Jak will meet the Precursor monk Seem, and learn the path of Light before choosing his own destiny.

The wasteland itself, said to be five times the size of Haven City, is fully open-ended, impressively detailed and riddled with danger. Naughty Dog has promised that Jak and Daxter will return to Haven at some point in Jak 3 too, though expect it to be rebuilt very differently and full of citizens who are no longer afraid to stand up for themselves. Clearly this is far more a progressive adventure than the two previous Jak And Daxter instalments, with a genuine sense of causality spun through its narrative events.

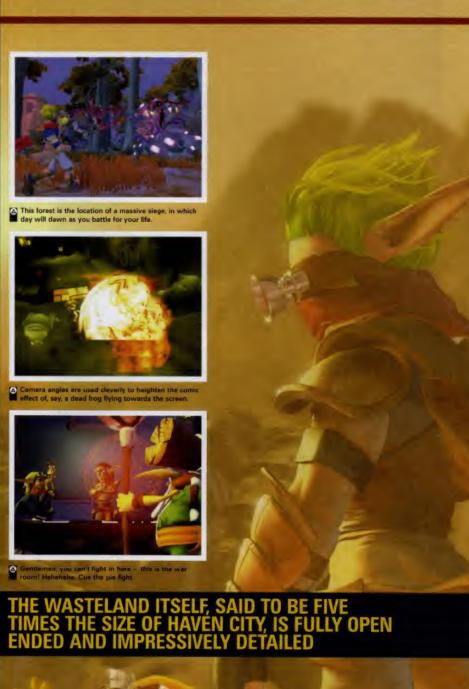
Jak's weapon set has also been improved greatly, as now his three colour-coded weapons each have three upgrades. For the standard yellow laser, improvement adds an Intelligent Ricochet, which chooses the angle of deflection most likely to hit an enemy. Blue upgrades to an effective lightning gun for its second stage, while the red fire gun can be pointed at the floor and used as a smart bomb. The final stage of tinkering for each gun consists of a floating drone gun for yellow, a Half-Life-esque bug gun for blue and an all-powerful rocket launcher on the red.



All the weapons in Jak 3 carry a colourful light effect, which complement the well-lit levels and cement the overall quality of the package.



This is the final upgrade for the blue gun, and looks a lot like a swarm of flies that buzz violently between your adversaries and land in their orange luice.





be interested to know that the eight dune buggies. dotted around the wasteland each come with individual engine capacities, torque settings and gear ratios, as well as coming in front, rear and four-wheel drive models. What's more, they actually drive differently, although play" can't help but feel that

little extra touches will give the impression that you're playing a quality game, if not consciously then subconsciously." It's reassuring to know that such infinitesimal effort has not been included at the expense of other elements, and that every aspect of Jak 3 is treated with this level of genuine care.





)) how the strong narrative elements which held the previous instalments together have been advanced this time around - a process which typifies both developer's different approaches to game design. For Ratchet & Clank, the period between chapters two and three has seen something of a role reversal, with gamer-favourite Clank earning himself a role in a Bond-esque secret agent TV series, while Ratchet has been relegated to the level of hapless sidekick. Immediately, it's a set-up ripe for Insomniac's anarchic sense of knowing, referential humour and wealth of original ideas - something which development head Brian Allgeier is keen to emphasise. "Insomniac, at this point, is over one hundred people, and we get all sorts of ideas from everyone - it's a collaborative effort. The designers can't take credit for all the ideas, and neither can the story people because we get so many ideas... it's pretty hard to say where they all come from but there's never a shortage." It's unclear exactly whose inspired idea it was to add an online Multiplayer mode to a title you would expect to be an entirely one-player experience, but we'll return to that later.

For Evan Wells, Game Director at Naughty Dog – and soon to be Big Dog following the amicable departure of company head Jason Rubins – the key to creative success lies in developing each game individually and on its own merits, especially for a title that has so feverously sought to blur the lines

between genres. "We try to create experiences that correspond to the core themes of the game," he begins, when asked about Jak's unusual progression from platform adventure to pseudo-GTA to this, the last in the trilogy-arc Rubins originally envisaged. "I hate to use the term 'platforming' because I think we've moved beyond simple platform gaming – we try to put our own spin on it in line with the Jak

hinted at it in Jak II, and we wanted to show the player in Jak 3." But why the apparent backwards shift in technology? "Well, the world is very different to the world of Jak II, where there are all sorts of Precursor, magic-type elements. The wasteland isn't about that — it's about mechanical elements, it's about the things you can find in order to survive. Thematically, we wanted to fit into that design, so they aren't

FOR A CONSOLE AS PERVASIVE AS PLAYSTATION2, THERE ARE ACTUALLY VERY FEW TRIPLE-A PLATFORM LICENSES

And Daxter universe... the way we try to keep the Jak And Daxter 'platform' fans interested in new ideas is to put our own play on them and keep it in a way that makes it all feel integrated." As a result, the beginning of Jak 3 sees our intrepid duo banished from Haven City by the sinister Count Veger following Jak II's Dark Jak exploits, forced to join a race of underclass called 'The Forgotten Ones' who inhabit the surrounding desert wasteland. Gone are the hover-cars of Jak II, replaced by Mad Max-esque dune buggies used to navigate the immense, freeroaming and surprisingly varied wasteland hub-world.

Again, it's a decision informed not by a need to be gamer-friendly, but by a desire to continue the narrative biologically. "The wasteland environment is referred to in Jak II because it's where Sig has come from," continues Wells. "So we

going to have hover vehicles." In short, the themes, characters and environments inform the narrative and gameplay elements, a factor also evident in another new addition to the Jak universe - an angelic, defensive Light Jak to complement the aggressive Dark Jak persona of Jak II: Renegade. Wells offers simple reasoning for the character's evolution: "In Jak II we introduced the idea of Dark Jak - so it was only natural for us to balance that out with Jak 3 - but it also plays importantly into the storyline", of which we are promised more at E3.

In contrast, Ratchet & Clank's insistence on varied and often humorous firepower could be seen as a less sophisticated approach by cynical gamers wary of kiddie-fodder masquerading as quality gaming — and they would surely be wrong to assume as much — but the intent to keep a strong balance between

FIINNY HOW?

THERE ARE NO ABSOLUTES IN COMEDY





t's tough," begins Brian Allgeier when asked about Insomniac's approach to comedy, "because there's always a bunch of subjective choices developers have to make, and it's often like 'well, we can only have two winks to the camera and three nods." Such referential comedy will eventually get in the way of a good story and its effects on the audience is evident in a

great many blockbuster movies, but few gamers could probably imagine their developers of choice arguing over the relevance of a joke or whether they have broken a taboo. In truth, a great deal of Ratchet & Clank 3's humour originates from pop-culture references, from 'Secret Agent Clank' to smaller references in the dialogue. Interestingly, the method is also in direct opposition to Naughty

Dog's approach to comedy: "We want to maintain the purity of the Jak & Daxter universe," states Evan Wells, "so we would never want to reference a character or movie in such a way that would make a connection to our world". The result is a self-contained fantasy narrative which finds humour through irony, pathos and a bit of the good-old pratfall-with-sound-effect technique.



RATCHET'S LATEST ADVENTURE SEES HIM RELEGATED TO THE ROLE OF SIDEKICK, AS CLANK STARS IN A TV SERIES



NOT-SO-SMART GUN

HOW DO YOU DRAW THE LINE BETWEEN 'CRAZY' AND JUST PLAIN STUPID?

he Ratchet & Clank series is famed for its originality in creating new and improved hipmounted methods of murder — on US shores this instalment will be subtitled 'Up Your Arsenal' — though when asked where the line is drawn on ridiculous firepower, Brian Allgeier smiles. "We had an idea for a gun that fires a disco ball," he remembers, "you fired it, and all the enemies started dancing and would ignore you. Stuff like that is funny, but then you can just go and kill them all. It's hard to balance something as powerful as that." It's a far cry from games where a single button press results in a kaleidoscopic full-screen explosion that lasts twenty seconds. "A lot of times an idea is way too powerful," chuckles Allgeier.



We've seen mirror puzzles like this before, but rarely on such a large scale.



The cloud of green gas is the work of The Infector, which causes enemies to drunkenly turn against each other.

RATCHET & CLANK 3

VITAL STATISTICS

PUBLISHER: Sony
DEVELOPER: Insomniac
WEB SITE: www.scea.com

GENRE

» PLATFORMER

T . 1-8

ALPHA C

As mentioned before, the beginning of Ratchet's latest adventure sees him relegated to the role of sidekick, as Clank stars in a syndicated television series called 'Secret Agent Clank', a thinly-veiled James Bond rip-off with nods to The Green Hornet.

While Clank relaxes in the glow of infamy, the universe is quickly forgetting Ratchet's previous efforts at heroism. Until, that is, Ratchet's home planet Veldin is threatened by the evil Dr Nefarious, a tyrant on a mission to eradicate biological life (or 'squishies' as he calls it) from the universe. To this end, Nefarious has employed the stupidest biological creatures in the galaxy to help him.

Answering the call of the President, Ratchet and Clank travel to Florana to extract "the only man who has defeated Nefarious", series regular Captain Qwark – who has spent the time between the two games in the rainforest going a bit Colonel Kurtz, and so must first be tamed before he can join your quest. From here the formula that worked so well with Ratchet 1 & 2 returns, with each new level (including lush jungles, industrial complexes and futuristic cities) adding to Ratchet's arsenal of ridiculous weapons. Among those announced already include the Infector Gun (see main body text), a laser refractor and the Rift Inducer, a gun that literally fires a miniature black hole into the air, which sucks in any enemies around it before collapsing in on itself.

But the main focus of *Ratchet & Clank* 3 for many will be the online multiplayer mode – a four-on-four team skirmish involving much shooting and driving of vehicles. It's reminiscent of a large-scale, outdoor *Laser Quest* battle, with both teams required to capture an opposing team's base while defending their own using carnage-producing arsenals.



Captain Qwark should be somewhere inside that green dome. Sadly though that means actually getting there, which is much tougher than it sounds.



This is a typical multiplayer snapshot — it rarely gets less frenetic and fast-paced than this. We don't think we've ever seen a shotgun with a wider spread either.





TAKE THESE BROKEN WINGS

AND LEARN TO FLY AGAIN, AND LEARN TO LIVE SO FREE

ooking like a skeletal blue neon angel, Light Jak represents the divine side of Eco-worship. Following his banishment for carrying the burden of Dark Jak, our hero finds a wasteland temple where a Precursor monk named Seem shows him the 'path of light', a spiritual belief system vaguely like a lighthearted Buddhism. Later, Jak will be forced to look deep within himself to find his own true spiritual path – while beating the hell out of anything that moves, obviously. Naughty Dog promises that Light Jak's move set – which includes flying as well as a shield/regeneration feature and a bonus skill to be revealed at E3 – will be more focussed on "facilitating Jak's movement through the level and not an aggressive mode."

)) gameplay and character elements is still just as strong. Though Insomniac is keeping tight-lipped about many of the new weapons being introduced for the three-quel, the developer did demonstrate The Infector, a green gas-emitting gun which causes any enemies within inhalation range to attack one another. In any other game, it would be a duck shoot to empty the screen of baddies with such a formidable weapon, but as the beasts can still attack Ratchet at random, the player is never given cause to become complacent or forced to happily plod through each level unchallenged.

A good job too, as quick reflexes and an ability to think on your feet will be needed for the surprise Multiplayer modes, which Insomniac is confident will become a major selling point. "The fact we got such a positive reaction from playtesters really bodes well," beams Allgeier (apparently, nine out of ten respondents claimed they would buy the game even if it didn't have a single-player mode). Having managed to wangle some exclusive hands-on time with the online Ratchet 3 code, play™ is inclined to agree with the developer. Also available in four-player split-screen (with zero loss of detail, no less), it's a massive bonus addition to a beautiful one-player game, that itself looks to better its predecessors in both scale and execution. But why. we finally ask, did Insomniac decide to add a battle mode to a traditionally one-player title? "One thing Insomnia has always tried to do is to give players choices," explains Allgeier, "Some people will choose just to play the online/multiplayer game, some will choose the single player and most people (hopefully) will choose both... We want players to know that we're also building a very large single-player game... You're getting the best of both worlds - it's like a value meal."

An ability to deviate from expectation is certainly a factor both Sony's games have in common, and the need to avoid pigeonholing from the marketing men is agreed upon by both developers. As well as 'Secret Agent Clank' acting as a running gag throughout the game, Insomniac promises the character will definitely feature in some solo levels. Likewise, Jak 3 will feature a larger chunk of playable Daxter than in Renegade. Both teams have also been very careful to level out the learning curve, and to eradicate some of the more frustrating difficulty spikes which caused complaint last time around. "I've heard people say "Oh, I beat Ratchet & Clank in fifteen hours," describes Allgeier, conscious of the need to balance a game's challenge



for both experienced and inexperienced gamers, "whereas someone else will say it took them 30 hours to complete". As Evan Wells elaborates, "Parts of Jak II weren't consistently harder, but we found players were spending an hour on them when we had envisaged perhaps twenty minutes of gameplay... the designers are making the patterns more consistent, and we're also going to address it by adjusting the difficulty dynamically to come in line with the

sections, there are sections devoted to controlling a giant, spidery bombbot, levels that see Jak speedily laying track for a runaway train and a massive forest battle featuring mounted gun turrets, as well as new hoverboard manoeuvres and those top secret Light Jak moves, all courtesy of Sonic's level-design legend Hirokazu Yasuhara ("That guy just thinks in a different way to everybody else" says Wells, "and he brings a unique sense of design to

FOR ONCE, 'UNIQUE' DOESN'T SEEM TO BE A MISPLACED WORD AROUND JAK 3 OR RATCHET & CLANK 3

player's skill level".

There are few identifiable aspects of these two games that haven't been considered, redrafted and shown to gamers for their approval before being returned to the drawing board for more laborious tweaking. But what really stands out, particularly with Jak 3, is the wealth of different game types Naughty Dog has managed to somehow cobble together into a cohesive adventure to use a tenuous analogy, it's like Crash Bandicoot was actually Crash Nitro Racing, only with an exciting, sprawling storyline and characters you'd be proud to call your friends. As well as the promising driving

the team").

For once, 'unique' doesn't seem a misplaced word around either Jak 3 or Ratchet & Clank 3, as both genuinely manage to carve their own niche in the world of videogames, and with it should gamer a place in the collections of all types of gamers. As we move into the next generation of consoles, and with the advent of PSP, it is inevitable that other stalwarts of gaming will fall from grace as the games' technology develops faster than their characters or gameplay elements. play™ has little doubt that both of these titles will easily weather the storm and endure well beyond it.



The characters maybe of the cute and fluffy variety but the cityscape wouldn't be out of place in a Verhoeven movie.



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Playtesters said that they'd buy this game for the multiplayer alone and from the looks of these screens, we can see why.

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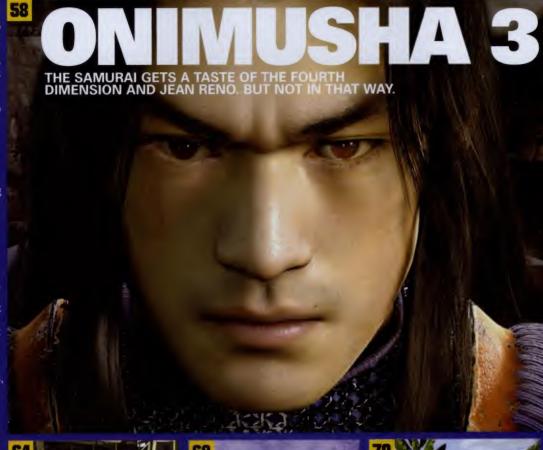


Play | PLAYING BAD GAMES SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO

Nice outfit. This month it's almost as if the play™ team jumped into a DeLorean (that would be a very wide DeLorean), hit 88 miles per hour and went back in time, Back To The Future-style, because there's a distinctly retro aroma to a few games up for review this month.

Hailing from a time when Michael Jackson was considered 'Bad' and famed for releasing seminal music albums instead of being accused of child molestation, the Mir Space Station was launched and wearing sweat bands was considered fashionable, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, a franchise that boasted an enormous toy range, cartoon (first airing in 1987), live action movie and association with Vanilla Ice, returns from hiatus, which leaves us with just one thing left to say - 'Cowabunga!

Then Capcom gets in on the retro action, releasing Hyper Street Fighter II to mark the series' 15th anniversary a celebration in videogame form of one of the most iconic games of the early Nineties. Where'd the time go?



MOJIB RIBON



RISE TO HONOR

GUARANTEE

Should you buy these games? That's the question we ask every time we review software. The phy" team has more than 20 ce in the industry and bring every minute of that knowledge to every review. We don't get out much, so most of our nmon language is based on non-existent words like "playability" and "immersive" know so much about our craft it hurts.

TRANSFORMERS

UIDE TO THE GRADES

We spend hours arguing over the stupidest things so every game gets the score it deserve

- 90 100: Classic! Buy this game now! Great games that you will love. Good fun, but lacking in magic 60 - 70:
- Just above average or short-lived Acceptable, but nothing more Average, Yawn. Buy it at your peril!
- Instant bargain bin fodder. It might load.

30 - 40:

RE:VIEW

REVIEWS

Where games truly become art...

ONIMUSHA 3

The Capcom samurai goes all flux capacitor on some demon ass.

12 HYPER STREET FIGHTER II

> Welcome to the most needless review since the last Street Fighter one.

RISE TO HONOR

Water is the softest stuff in the world but it can penetrate rock.

66 FIGHT NIGHT 2004 Silence is golden when

you can't think of a good intro comment.

MOJIB RIBON

A game that's single handedly revolutionising the email.

TRANSFORMERS

Decepticonned by another licence?

72 ALIAS

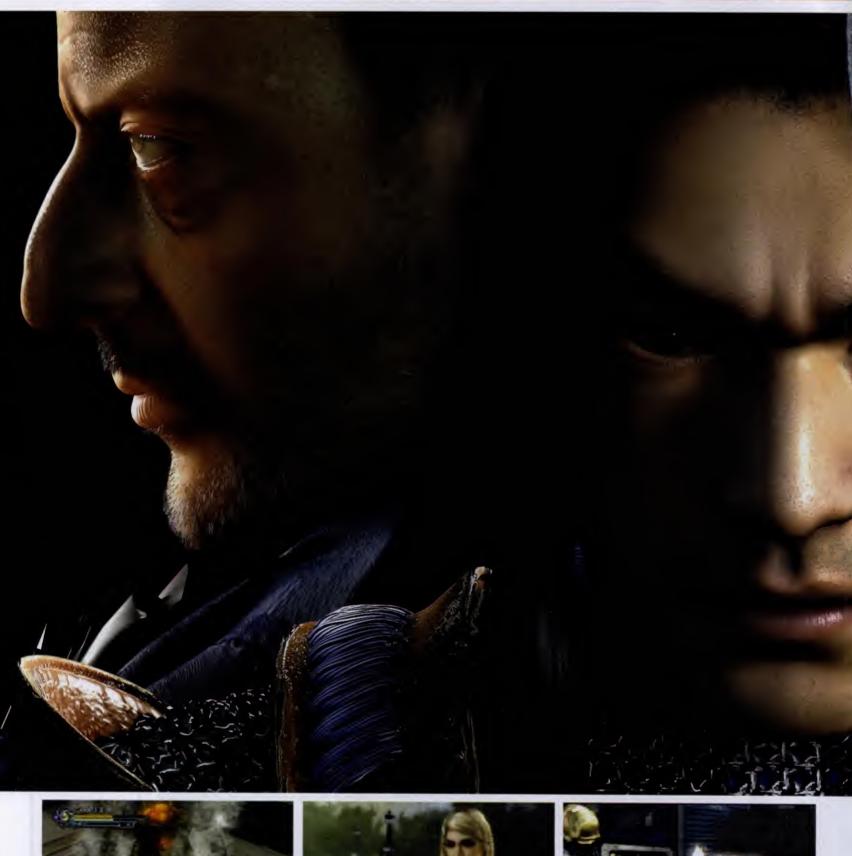
Decepticonned by another licence?

- **73** SERIOUS SAM Honest or ironic? You be
- the judge. **74 VAN HELSING**
- Decepticonned by another licence? **TEENAGE**
- MUTANT NINJA TURTLES WORLD
- CHAMPIONSHIP RUGBY The game they play in

heaven, apparently.

- 78 SINGSTAR Fans of their own voice will love it.
- THE SUFFERING NB: Games that evoke utter apathy get 50%.
- HITMAN CONTRACTS

time! 93%, by the way.





Demon turds are just the worst. For Christ's sake, what do they eat?



We'd bet money that this woman had to work extra hard to get to where she's got, and also that she's a right bitch because of it.



We've never understood why troops wear camouflage in urban warfare. It just doesn't make any sense.





ONIMUSHA 3

WHY SHUFFLE LIKE A ZOMBIE WHEN YOU CAN STRUT LIKE A SAMURAI?



eople going through a midlife crisis are occasionally heard mulling over the idea of being 'rebirthed' in a bid to reset any negative effects from their formative years, as if being smothered in a bed-sheet womb and donning a giant baby grow could have a dramatic effect on their current situation. Perhaps Onimusha 3's producer was having something of a midlife crisis when designing this latest instalment, because the very foundations that the series has been built on have been expunged.

It's a well-known fact that *Onimusha* began life as a *Resident Evil* spin-off – it featured the same bizarre 'turning on a sixpence' control method, somehow accepted by gamers as you would an eccentric aunt or a favourite cat's flea problem, and a similar recipe of 'plug hexagon-shaped gap with hexagon-shaped hexagon'

An awful lot of hype has surrounded the casting of Jean Reno as Jacques Blanc – Reno of course, starred as a super stylish assassin in the movie Leon (and turned down the role of Agent Smith in The Matrix... great career move, eh?). He joins up with original samurai Samanosuke, as ever bearing the likeness of actor and singer Takeshi Kanehiro, who played a super stylish assassin in Returner – can you spot Capcom's trick yet? The game's plot, which spins back and forth between 21st century Paris and feudal Japan is effective (if somewhat hackneyed), allowing for all manner of atmospheric locations to be used as battlegrounds and dynamic scenarios to arise from timeline switching.

Unlike previous games in the series, number three ditches pre-rendered backgrounds in favour of a full-on 3D approach and still delivers great

RESIDENT EVIL HAS BEEN SHUNNED LIKE IT'S YOUR PARENT'S FAVOURITE POPSTAR IN FAVOUR OF THE NEW KING OF COOL - DEVIL MAY CRY

puzzles. Onimusha 2 took the recipe and added a whole heap of sprinkles and chocolate chips, creating a superb game with a rewarding present-giving system. For Onimusha 3 however, the recipe book has been ripped to shreds. Resident Evil has been shunned like it's your parents' favourite popstar in favour of the new king of cool – Devil May Cry. The control system has been replaced, and that means series legend Samanosuke and the Gallic god Jacques Blanc get to run around like Dante, stabbing and skewering hell's finest. Needless to say, this has a profound effect on the game's overall feel.

visuals. Call us traditionalists though, because while L'Arc de Triomphe has been recreated with no lack of verve, it's the ancient Japan environments that capture our imagination with their intricate statues and elaborate architecture. Fixed camera angles still dictate your view of each location, however this does allow for some pretty spectacular framing of the action. Complimenting the drama admirably is the stirring soundtrack – Taiko drums thunder and hom sections blare during heated moments, while choral compositions kick in for the tranquil moments. This game deserves to be played loud.



Someone's blown a huge bubble with what looks like hubbbubba gum. Let's hope the demon war doesn't burst it.



You start off with a gun as Jacques and then get bestowed with a whip which somehow, is a much better weapon for demon-death.



Somebody sure wasn't absent the day the French police taught 'How to make a super-cool entrance'.

ONIMUSHA 3 🔘

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Capcom | DEVELOPER: In house | PRICE: \$ Import AGE RATING: 16+ | WEB SITE: www.capcom.co.in







IN THE KNOW

- Is the final instalment of the
- es a brand new fully 3D ne which looks superb.
- res a slew of new characters

'Onimusha 3 isn't just about killing but killing with style – Gallic hook-nosed, Gitanes-smoking style", or so we reported in our preview in issue 3. It turns out that we've never printed a truer word – just wait until you see Jacques blowing samurai zombies away with his pistol – it's like a rebirth of videogeme cool.



OUT NOW (JAP)

GAME WAS

Because both of them are testament to the fact that a bit of Gallic charm goes a long way to spicing up a tale of good vs evil.

A FILM IT WOULD BE BROTHERHOOD OF THE WOLF

STAND-OUT MOMENTS



A battle rages between





roof of the game's



Fire's great but not whe it's your village on fire

PLAYTIME

Meet Ako (at least we think that's her name), Jacques' and Samanosuke's Tinkerbell-inspired companion, who's about the same size as that buttockless-chap wearing popstar Christina Aguilera. What her modus operandi is we can't fathom, but she's blessed with the abilities to flit back and forth between time zones sending messages from hero to hero, to get in on the levelling-up deal with a special tunic that can be powered up with various gems and to fetch hard to reach items too. She also bears a more than a passing resemblance to Mathilda - Natalie Portman's character in Leon - starring none other than our main man Jean Reno.





Jacques had taken so long to climb this mountain that it was actually winter when he started – which explains the coat. Damn was he pissed when he found out that there was a lift on the other side.





The opening level sees you picking up the reins of Samanosuke making his way to the Honnoji Temple, which just happens to be a raging infemo - it's a glorious opening scene sucking the player straight into the game. Next, up pop some none-too-friendly neighbourhood demons and Onimusha veterans are guaranteed to feel a surge of elation, because the shuffling Samanosuke of old is no more - he actually runs in the direction you tilt the stick. Such an obvious and craved for improvement from Capcom and now it's finally here.

Unshackled from the aged Resident Evil control method, Sam is fleet of foot, adding a massive touch of pizzazz to the fighting.



Sam was annoyed at the size of the emerald in his ment ring. He reckons it slows him down.

Engage a group of enemies and he directs his attacks at whoever's nearest - if it dies before he's finished his flourish of sword blows he gracefully pirouettes, raining strikes down on the next-nearest foe. The rest of the control method functions exactly as fans will remember it. As ever, deceased fiends release a variety of different soul orbs into the air that can be sucked up using (see the 'Wake for Young Souls' boxout) and
guards - dashed handy on bosses and a few of the larger enemies the game throws at you, but an unnecessary luxury on sword-fodder. There's also a magic-imbued attack and a blow modifier, which causes Sam to produce his Long Bow for taking out distant targets and airborne enemies. Interestingly, players loathe to ditch the old control system will find it mapped to the digital pad, but after extended play with its replacement, revisiting it for purposes of nostalgia is particularly jarring - we won't be missing it, that's for sure.

While Samanosuke sticks pretty rigidly to the surly Ronin template, our French pal Jacques is a real hodgepodge of influences his initial weapon is a compact machine gun a real departure for the Onimusha series, and briefly introduced in the opening scene. Use of the gun is quickly taken away from you when

Jacques is sucked through a portal to Japan and introduced to his energy whip weapon with shades of Indiana Jones. In practice, Jacques' attacks work in a mightily similar way to Samanosuke's, with similarly prescribed attack combos. However, he has a few tricks of his own and in a nod to Tecmo's Rygar, Jacques is able to use his weapon to traverse environments by whipping certain hook points. which are in fact little fairy-type beings - yes, it's bizarre, but it worked in Rygar and it works equally well here, allowing for a greater level of interaction with the attractively-modelled locations. It also looks immensely cool to see Jacques swinging through the air. Later, his whip is upgraded to a segmented sword-cumwhip combo - as brandished by lvy in Soul Calibur - once again demonstrating the disparate influences that have gone into the game and specifically Jacques' design.

Collecting the souls of fallen enemies allows you to power up your current character's weapons and armour whenever you come to a save point. Sadly, this element of the game is criminally underdeveloped, while the benefits of powering up each individual item is not exactly clear. Thankfully though, given the increased onus on fighting in the game, there are a number of training





missions accessible from the save points. which take the form of an arena battle against a pick 'n' mix assortment of villains. Completion of the arena instructs you in the way of an additional fighting technique adding an extra layer of depth to the combat. Before long you'll be blessed with a host of counterattacking and offensive manoeuvres

As seems to be fashionable at the moment - see Torque in The Suffering, Jak in Jak II and the Hulk in The Hulk - during times of peril, and provided they have collected enough of the prerequisite souls, both Sam and Jacques can transform into a hyperpowered Onimusha form. Not only do they

of increased power.

more subtle nuances. However, it's painfully obvious that the final PAL version won't exactly test the old grey matter any more than say, sticking a disc into a very signposted, so-obvious-you-can't-miss-it, disc-shaped crevice - Onimusha is very much a straightforward hack-and-slash from A to C by way of B. More often than not when a puzzle presents itself - the aforementioned disc-shaped hole missing its disc or a generator missing a crank arm, for example - you are shepherded by the level design to exactly where the missing item lies. It's then just a case of backtracking, usually no more than a few screens, to slot the item into place and progress to the next area. It's

enemies. Unfortunately, it seems her Al routines include a 'daydream' command, as often she becomes rooted to the spot, making her something of a human barricade on the game's claustrophobic sewer section, eradicating any sense that there's an intelligent being co-operating with you. An even more criminal example occurs later when Sam joins Jacques in battle against a particularly tough samurai - Sam's enthusiasm for the battle is laughable and totally at odds with the battle hungry personality he exhibits when under your own slash-happy control.

The word is that Onimusha 3 will be the final title in the series, which is a real shame, not only because the quality of each instalment has been refreshingly high, but because players still haven't been granted a definitive Onimusha experience - the control method has finally been given the spruce-up it needs, the presentation is impeccable and the fighting enjoyable. However, the puzzle element of the game is chronically undernourished, holding Onimusha 3 back from classic status - a victim of the Devil May Cry effect if ever there was one. We do fully expect our score for the PAL version to be a little higher than this one though, providing the voice acting is up to scratch - and the plot isn't merely a load of metaphysical masturbation, of course.

ONIMUSHA IS VERY MUCH A STRAIGHTFORWARD HACK-AND-SLASH FROM A TO C BY WAY OF B

look seriously ticked off, the attacks that they emit are even more powerful and any blows landed on enemies release health souls - it's a clever way of ensuring that difficult boss battles aren't prohibitively tough.

So, a liberal dose of swordplay then, Of course, bearing in mind the fact that Onimusha 3 is jam-packed with Japanese text and voiceovers, it's safe to assume that we're missing out on a fair few of the game's

by no means a chore and at least provides a little punctuation to the fighting, but a few trickier brainteasers and less linear routes would have created a far more gripping and varied journey.

Another underdeveloped aspect of the game is the involvement of various sidekicks. Early on, Samanosuke forms an alliance with the aesthetically pleasing Michelle who follows the player around helping to dispatch

Once again souls make a return to the world of Onimusha. The souls of dead foes can be reaved using ②. Yellow souls replenish your energy gauge, blue, your magic bar, pink souls are collected and later used to level up your stats at save points, while purple souls are the real rarities - collect five and you're granted the ability to turn into your Onimusha form, which not only enables you to kick much arse, but provides additional benefits such as releasing extra yellow souls.





Paris. It got destroyed in *Armageddon* and now demonized in *Onimusha 3*. Tough break.



We can't say that we always felt a pixellated version of Jean Reno walking on top of ancient Japanese roof-tops was the next logical step for videogames, but if the boot fits...



Seriously though, who did the demons think was going to win? Them or the guy with Tom Cruise's armour? Idiots.



VERDICT •

LOOKS

SOUND

Powerful composition not a noodling guitar lick to he heard - hi

GAMEPLAY

The Devil May Cry is has turned out to be both a blessing and a curse



Different weapons to powe up, hidden moves to earn it'll last a while

OR YOU COULD TRY



Slower paced, but certainly deeper in places and almost



particular gem speaks for itself. Wonderful.

The Onimusha series' identity crisis continues as it ditches many of its Resident Evil trappings and pulls off its best Devil May Cry Impression, which actually turns out to be a good thing as this is some of the best hack 'em and slash 'em fun we've had in a long while.



PlayStation 2

HYPER STREET FIGHTER II: THE ANNIVERSARY EDITION

INFORMATION .

PUBLISHER: Capcom | DEVELOPER: Capcom | PRICE: \$79.95







IN THE KNOW

ires Normal, *Champion Edition,* o, S*uper* and *Super Turbo* ons of each character.

The Street Fighter series has sold more than 27 million copies.

Zangief is far from crap - believe it

We love Street Fighter, and we'll prove it - in issue 2's preview we said "If the latest code proves one thing, it's that Street Fighter is still one of the best fighting games out there." Just ignore the bit that said Evil Ryu will be e in Hyper Street Fighter II – he won't be be didn't debut until Alpha 2.

RELEASE DATE **4 JUNE 2004**

AN ARCADE CABINET IT WOULD BE A WELL-WORN STREET FIGHTER II ONE

Because what it might lack in glitz and glamour it makes up for with the very finest in retro gameplay. Sweet.

STAND OUT MOMENTS







..Fierce Dragon Punc



Or you could just do a

PLAYTIME



15 YEARS IN THE MAKING

hoa, déjà vu - if anything is worth \$80 of your hard-earned (or illegally gained for that matter) money, it's the slightly-furryaround-the-edges feeling of nostalgia that playing Hyper Street Fighter II imparts. However, unlike many trips down memory lane, where dusting off an old classic is a lot like swigging from a ten year-old bottle of milk and expecting the contents to be cool and fresh, playing Hyper Street Fighter II is more akin to sipping vintage wine - it gets better with age.

Actually that's not quite right - while the Hyper Street Fighter II engine, based on

the one used in Super Turbo, is one of the most finely-crafted fighting game engines ever created, the sad fact is the aged Street Fighter sprites are looking well past their use-by date. If you're happy to treat Hyper Street Fighter as an anthology in the vein of Midway Arcade Classics then this is perfectly excusable, but we can't deny that we're itching to see the Street Fighter cast reborn - no, not in 3D (heathens...) - but in some high resolution 2D artwork of Guilty Gear X calibre.

Instead of creating a collection of five separate Street Fighter II incarnations, Capcom has instead opted for a megamix



Those who have doubted Zangief's power amateurs when it comes to Street Fighter

of the five, basically meaning that at the character select screen, you not only choose your character but the era they come from as well. This of course has a dramatic impact on many of the characters - see The Generation Game boxout. Sadly though, if you're playing solo, the computer only ever plays as the Super Turbo iteration of each character. This is a massive flaw in the game, making it more of a bastardised Super Turbo than a genuine retro effort. It also makes the game freakin' difficult if you're masochistic enough to take out an original era character on the highest difficulty setting vintage winning tactics from back in the day are crushed by the more modern Super Turbo characters and their fancypants super moves.

Perhaps the greatest handicap facing players, however, is the DualShock2 - for connoisseurs bred in the arcades or on consoles of yesteryear and their fighting game-friendly joypads, adapting to a DualShock2 is a chore - the digital pad is an obvious encumbrance and no combination of ⓐ, ②, ⊙, ⊙, ⊙ or ③ will ever feel as natural as having six buttons laid out in a fighting configuration and as a



lega gives T-Hawk a lesson on how to prance about like a

If you're out of the loop on all things Street Fighter related, the revelation that Hyper Street Fighter II enables you to choose between different generations of character will mean little. So allow us to explain, using Street Fighter's poster boy, Ryu, as an example. In the original Street



nal Ryu performs his trade mark

Fighter II, Ryu was blessed with just three special moves - a fireball (Hadoken), a Dragon Punch (Shoryuken) and a Hurricane Kick (Tatsumaki). Got that? Come Street Fighter II: Hyper Fighting, he had learned how to perform his Hurricane Kick in mid-air: by Super Street Fighter he



gained a more powerful version of his fireball, while his mid-air Hurricane Kick travelled on a new trajectory. By Super Turbo, Ryu is hardly recognisable from his humble beginnings, gaining a brand new super fireball and all manner of alternative punch animations.



Now that's a Fireball. Even in the early days Ryu was a formidable character

GOOD POINTS

- Five minutes of play is all it takes to conjure up memories
- Choice of original musicArguably the best fighting.





BAD POINTS

- Playing on a DualShock is like expecting Henry to play football in Wellington boots.
- Capcorn are still peddling the same old character sprites .
- Some people prefer 3D games

VERDICT

LOOKS

Double the above figure if you're actually reading this

SOUND



Features some of the most whistleable videogame tunes

GAMEPLAY

Awesome stuff, but Capcom's later work improved the

LONG TERM



The walk down memory lane is nearly always just a

OR YOU COULD TRY



CAPCOM VS SNK 2

2D beat-'em-ups seem to have some fight left in ther after all. 95%



CAPCOM VS MARVEL 2

A pantomime of a bear 'em-up game. Far too chaotic to be fun. 61%

SUMMARY

It's not quite the Street Fighter anthology we were hoping for but there's no doubting its ability to delight even after all these years. Hopefully Hyper Street Fighter II signifies Capcom putting the hallowed 'II' series to rest, before releasing Street Fighter 4. We can but dream.



T FIGHTER II: SARY EDITION

net result you will struggle to perform a few of the game's more elongated and troublesome combos.

However, it's a moot point when two players go head to head, or better still, a group of players battle it out in a winnerstays-on contest, as the disadvantage is universal. In contrast to the disappointing one-player mode, versus mode is a riotous success, with both players free to pick and choose both character and era. This naturally leads to heated battles, and when both players are masters, well, it's enough to bring a tear to the eye. Not only are versus battles as compelling as they were 12 years ago when the original Street Fighter II was first released, but they're a great way to acclimatise old players who've strayed from the fold with new-fangled concepts like super moves. There are actually people out there who've never experienced the joys of a Final Atomic Buster - it's shocking, we know.

For anyone that has fond memories of playing *Street Fighter* in those halcyon 16-bit days, *Hyper Street Fighter II* is a no-brainer purchase, especially at \$80 – the sepia-toned memories it evokes are priceless. So why hasn't it scored more? Well, as we've already mentioned, the graphics which might well have been a revelation in 1992 have been totally surpassed by the *Guilty Gear X* series, and that's not the only area that *Hyper Street Fighter* is lacking. Capcom was always



Cammy used to be a great character but now we can't help but think of Kylie and by association, the movie This means that Cammy is irredeemably hated by the PLAY team.

famed for releasing endless Street Fighter updates and while few ever captured the success of the Street Fighter II Turbo days, they all managed to further refine, tweak and hone the experience. We might praise Hyper's precision gameplay but Street Fighter Alpha 2 was even more balanced and tactical, Alpha 3 did the select-aplaying-style approach with even greater verve, not to mention offering a two-player

co-operative mode and Street Fighter 3, well, it's a further evolution of what's on offer here, introducing a wonderful parrying system.

So make no mistake about it, buy Hyper Street Fighter II: The Anniversary Edition and you're only reliving the past where the Street Fighter series offers so much more than what's presented here. However, Street Fighter fans that have fallen by the wayside should grab a copy as soon as possible, not only is it guaranteed to rekindle your fighting spirit but hopefully it'll convince Capcom to hurry up and release Street Fighter 4.

PLAYING HYPER STREET FIGHTER II IS MORE AKIN TO SIPPING VINTAGE WINE - IT GETS BETTER WITH AGE



The original arcade attract sequence is here in all it glory. Oh, all right, it looks crap.



"Hadoken" – 'nuff said.



The phrase that launched a million rumours. And no, you can't play as Sheng Long.



RISE TO HONOUR

INFORMATION .

PUBLISHER: Sony | DEVELOPER: Foster City Studio | PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: M15+ | WEB SITE: au.playstation.com







Memory Car

mory Card Dual Shock 2

IN THE KNOW

- _Feaures a fully motion captured Jet Li, which looks incredible.
- Action directed by famous fightchoreographer Cory Yuen.
- Features a 360° combat system

PRINK FORM

This may not have been a movie license but we were worried that this was going to turn into a Jet Li money wagon. Needless to say, these worries were soon pushed away.



» IF THIS GAME WAS

A FIGHTING STYLE IT WOULD BE DRUNKEN BOXING.

This game is, deceptively, a lot better than you might imagine and is definitely entertaining to watch.



Rise To Honour has sucked us in zipline and sinker. Heh.



Jet may look cool but secretly he's thinking that he might have ripped his trousers with that one.



STAND-OUT MOMENTS



Jet clearly has many ways to fight.



There's simple yet many hand-to-hand combat...



use of a firearm...



...or the more imaginative method: drowning.

RISE TO HONOUR

LI-DING THE WAY FOR MARTIAL ARTS GAMES EVERYWHERE

ges and ages ago now there was a rumour going around that John Woo (of Face/Off fame) was setting up his own videogame company. This was very exciting prospect that led to our dreams becoming full of all kinds of crazy, plot-free, Eastern game action. Unfortunately this never really became much more than a rumour and, apart from the occasional mediocre movie tie in, there have been no games to bring these desires to fruition. That is until Rise To Honour.

It seems a bit of a cliché to say that this game makes you feel as if 'you're playing through a film' but that's exactly what it does. This is full of cool action, cool stunts and cool fight scenes with you looking cool in the middle of it all. Cool. Hey, we're not easily pleased (not by a long way) but this does manage to capture that martial arts action essence in a way few games can. Obviously being able to play as Jet Li helps a lot and it's obvious that the developer has watched

a lot of films to get an idea of how action sequences should work. For example, the game sees you getting dumped into the centre of a group of thugs at the start of every cannon-fodder fight scene with each thug a little unsure of whether to go for you or not. Of course, as soon as one grunt makes the first move, everything kicks off and some well-placed breakable scenery starts begging for falling bodies. This is classic martial arts movie-making made specifically to make the hero look good. Whilst avoiding being too easy, the game tries very hard to ensure that you can show-off playing the game regardless of how badly you're actually doing.

THIS IS FULL OF COOL ACTION, COOL STUNTS AND COOL FIGHT SCENES WITH YOU LOOKING COOL IN THE MIDDLE OF IT ALL



When you get surrounded the game can become a little unforgiving but every so often you'll come out unscathed.



Pillars, walls and handy boxes can be used for cover but this is about as close as this game gets to any stealth elements.



A quick 360° rotation of the stick and three evil doers are introduced to the floor.

PLAYTIME







BAD POINTS

- nders the action.
- spite the well-implemented ighting system

VERDICT .

LOOKS



throughout the as

SOUND



GAMEPLAY



LONG TERM



OR YOU COULD TRY





BLADE II

Makes use of a direction

SUMMARY

The camera may be dodgy at times and it is a onetrick pony, but this is still a very entertaining game. If you play a lot of videogames it's probably safe to say that you like martial arts films, and if you watch a lot of those then it's safe to say you'll love this.



The developer has done a stunning 4 job of transferring Jet Li into the digital world. The character model is nothing short of perfect and the animation (all captured by Li) remains true to his fighting style. If you are a fan of the Jet then you're going to be very happy with this game.





This includes the obligatory use of slow motion, but don't worry, the game hasn't gone all Matrix on us. Yes, you can jump through the air in slow motion whilst firing off two guns, but the game only slows down a fraction and the screen only blurs a slight amount to give you that all-important rush without you realising you're still playing a game. Just play Enter The Matrix or Max Payne and you'll see what we mean by the fact that overuse of this effect can detract from the gamenlay.

The best use of slow motion in the game comes with the ultra-stylish. Wushu-powered big hits. On the occasional important punch or kick, the camera will switch to a dramatic angle, showing the blow in slow-motion before cutting back to the action. Unfortunately, this is a bit overused in the game. It should only be reserved for the bigger opponents or the bodies crashing into scenery but regardless, it's still good to

watch to begin with and it does give you a breather later on when you're bored of looking at them.

Another reason the action scenes are so good in this game is because the developer has very wisely decided to vary the content. This means you get sections where it's you versus loads of thugs in hand-to-hand combat, you stuck in the middle of a gunfight or you racing to get something done. Okay, so admittedly the variety here doesn't have 'wideload' stamped on the side but it's certainly sufficient enough to avoid any kind of monotony.

The control system manages to cope with all situations without too many problems. The use of the right analogue stick for combat (although no longer original) is a fantastic idea for a game like this. Knock the stick in the appropriate direction and you can lash out with satisfying force. This can be used to link lots of moves together in a

variety of directions in true martial arts style. The only major drawback to this is the fact that you cannot control the camera, which can be very annoying. Half of the time the game remains cinematic (usually during the action) but at other times you will inevitably get very annoyed. Surely, it shouldn't be this difficult to find your way around in a linear, glorified scrolling beat-'em-up.

If the action sequences weren't so damn good it would be difficult to overlook this, but then, what else would you expect from an official Jet Li game? We would love to have sat in on the motion capture for this particular game - the animations are spot on and we recommend holding down the dodge button and just watching Mr Li duck and weave around every blow thrown at him. Like we said, this game has cool written all over it. Of course there is only so long this martial arts action novelty can last but there's plenty of fun in here to justify a purchase.



Jet has clearly opted for the legendary squeeze-the-other-guy's-balls move.



Finally, after years of dreaming, we finally have a game that does justice to a helicopter versus Jet battle.



bullet-time based actioners called Max Payne



PlayStation-2

FIGHT NIGHT 2004

INFORMATION .

PUBLISHER: EA Sports | DEVELOPER: In-house | PRICE: \$99.95 RATING: M15+ | WEB SITE: www.easports.com







Memory Card

ry Card Dual Shock

IN THE KNOW

- Features the 'revolutionary' Total Punch Control system.
- _One helluva list of pugilists, including Ali, Frazier and La Motta.
- _Superb likenesses in both looks

PRIOR FORM

This is actually Fight Night's play" debut as there was no preview code available previously. However, we have played Knockout Kings before (EA's previous attempt at covering the sport) and suffice to say that EA has decided to ditch that particular franchise in favour of Fight Night. Good for EA.



RELEASE DATE

» IF THIS GAME WAS

A CHILDHOOD PASTIME, IT WOULD BE THUMB WARS

At first it feels odd and tends to really work the old opposables but pretty soon you'll be having far too much fun to care.



La Motta Vs Robinson. It's like Raging Bull, only in colour and... actually, it's not like Raging Bull at all is it?



This is Tigger, he commentates throughout the game and needs to be shot.



STAND-OUT MOMENTS



Muhammad Ali looks jus



Joe Frazier.



Jake La Motta looks just like Jake La Motta



Sugar Ray looks just like Sugar Ray.

FIGHT NIGHT 2004

A GAME SO BAD* IT MAKES MEDICINE SICK

ing, ding. Silly words, but rest assured they form an onomatopoeia of something that has preceded some of the greatest stories of triumph since man first learnt he could hurt someone else using his fist. We are, of course, talking about boxing.

The sport of punching has a history that's smothered in drama, the best of which has been, more often than not, successfully translated to film, be it a documentary or motion picture. These prizefighters have been the sporting

giants and ogres of the past century. They're strong and powerful. We want to be them. Videogames may one day enable us to be just that, but until that day we'll have to make do with Fight Night 2004, which as it turns out, isn't a bad thing at all.

EA is so loaded it makes Don King look like an electrocuted vagrant on some kind of acid trip. There is a bad side to this: EA can get greedy and drip out some lazy sequel to a weak franchise. The good side? Well apart from

the spit and polish we've become accustomed to thanks to EA's large wad of cash, it can afford to, and occasionally does, try something new. FIFA's Off-The-Ball (TM) gimmick didn't really work but goddamnnit if Fight Night's Total Punch Control system isn't the best use of the right analogue stick since, well, its invention.

The TPC system is no doubt what EA will be shouting about come advert time and, for a change, rightly so. Instead of trying to button-bash your way through an Ali-Frazier bout as you would in Knockout Kings, Fight Night's control system offers a much more fluid and graceful representation of the sport. And as any Angelo Dundee-wannabe will tell you, pugilism is as much to do with not hitting as it is to do with pummelling your opponents already ugly face in. The TPC system understands this and enables the player to stop halfway through a haymaker if, for whatever reason, they so desire. It's not all glory for the innovative system though, as it can be thumb-socket-rippingly hard to use at times, but, like a fixed Marciano fight, it gets results.

It's strange to think that after the (critical) success of *Rocky*, EA would choose to be so innovative in what is

DESPITE SUCH WELCOME INNOVATION, FIGHT NIGHT IS STILL A FEW GYM-VISITS AWAY FROM BEING A KNOCKOUT



If you can manage to take your eyes of the lady, take note of the detail gone into the fighting arena. Nice, eh?



La Motta takes Robinson down. Apparenti Sugar Ray had overcooked Jake's steak.

PLAYTIME

nin les lays was made

The entrances are grand, although can sor contradict the personality of the boxer.

Mosley is so good he can deliver left-hand uppercuts without even looking.

essentially a punch and kick genre

EA has given its best shot and come away with a TKO. That's TKO mind, because despite such welcome innovation, Fight Night is still a few

The main problem is situated about five centimetres away from the right analogue stick. No, it's not your hand,

did this we'll never know, as it makes movement of your chosen head-beater painful. And that's painful in the kidney-

bruising, pissing blood kind of way.

Sounds a bit harsh, but when your

meeting with an Ali flurry, you want to

boxer's face is in the middle of a

get out of there as quickly and as





- Rag-doll physics subtract from the realism of the game.

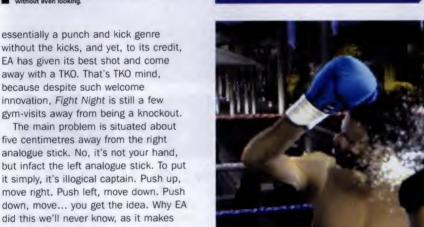
Fight Night's innovations don't start and stop with the TPC system, they also avoid the button-bashing cliché of recovery. Use the analogue sticks to line up the three images of the ref within the time-limit to continue with your beating, but be warned it gets a lot tougher every time your boxer 'trips on his shoelace'.



The first person perspective starts off with you



Gradually you have to bring the ref into focus



The likenesses of the boxers is uncanny, it's just a shame that the objective of the game is to make your opponent look less like their real-life counterpart.

simply as possible. Unfortunately, Fight Night just doesn't let you. Incredibly, another problem is with the rag-doll physics. Yes, that's right, the ragdoll physics. As much as we have enjoyed seeing Sonny "Ain't he ugly" Liston crash realistically against the ropes and then crumple to the floor, the rag-doll physics actually end up making everything decidedly unbelievable. A dramatic fall to the canvas is entirely welcome come the last minute of the final round, but when you've negotiated a knockdown in the first round and your opponent gets up after three seconds after looking like he'd just been delivered a left hook from God, the game loses a certain reality.

This is a shame because everything else in the game is about as lifelike as current technology will allow. The boxers, of which there are many, are extremely well-rendered and supported by some fantastic animation, alluding the fighter's various unique styles of bodybashing and yes dammit, even their personalities. The standard of each boxer is also a fair representation of how things would be if they were all in their prime today, with the exception of Lennox "All I can do is jab and play

chess" Lewis, who is laughably on a par with Ali. In his wildest dreams, perhaps.

A solid Career and Create-a-player mode nicely round off a genuine oh-goon-then-one-more-go game but the real fun to be had is in fighting on multiplayer. As innovative and as polished as Fight Night may be, its real success is in managing to capture just some of the thrill and drama found in the sport's glory days.

*Meaning 'good', obviously.



VERDICT

LOOKS



SOUND



use of silence in the gar

GAMEPLAY











Worse than Fight Night every way. Still, it might be cheaper...

Visually it's everything we've come to expect from EA but it's the new fighting system that really surprises, dragging every ounce of blood-drenched fun out of the genre, let down only by some disagreeable movement controls and a flawed use of rag-doll physics.





MOJIBRIBON

INFORMATION INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Sony | DEVELOPER: NanaOn-Sha | PRICE: \$ Import AGE RATING: N/A | WEB SITE: www.playstation.jp







ard Dual Shock

IN THE KNOW

- _A game that enables you to create your own lyrics.
- Sing the content of your e-mail
- _Creates slight bemusement to non-Japanese speakers.

PRIOR FORM

NanaOn-Sha developed Parappa The Rapper, Um Jammer Lammy, Vib Ribbon, Parappa 2 and Majibribon. We wouldn't be surprised if it also came up with the concept of 'wonder', 'happiness', 'irreverence' and a whole bunch others that our dictionary has yet to recognise.



RELEASE DATE OUT NOW (JAP)

» IF THIS

A SONG IT WOULD BE IN GREEK

You can bob your head and smash a plate to it, but you just can't understand a word of it. It's all Greek, to you.





here's the green sto



nistake and it's over.



Mojibri in a higher



Flounder with the ink and you get smudged.

PLAYTIME





MOJIBRIBON

SURREAL JAPANESE INK MAN CHARACTER FOUND TO BE SKILLED AT DOING LINES

he importing of PlayStation 2 games: an exercise best described as a last resort of a desperate gamer or as something for connoisseurs. If you can penetrate the language you could be playing *Onimusha 3* right now, or you could wait until the end of the year for a PAL release. If you can penetrate the language you could be playing what is essentially the sequel to *Vib Ribbon* too. The game's based on Japanese writing, so it's fair to say your enjoyment of the title

will be enhanced should you understand Hiragana. This 1200 year-old calligraphy style is the backbone of the game and as such, should put the iced rod of fear down the spine of any of you out there who don't know their Katakana from their Kanji. Well xenoglossophobics, do not fret since *Mojibribon* is just as playable as its predecessor even if it's incomprehensible to the uninformed. In fact, in actual, bonafide fact, in real, genuine, balls-to-the-wall honesty, it's still a joy to play.

Deep down inside we always knew it would be. It had to be, it's made by the pacifistic beatnik mother of invention behind Parappa The Rapper and Um Jammer Lammy and if there's one thing we know about Masaya Matsurra, it's that he makes games full of happy, happy, joy joy.

Abstract. It's all very abstract. And simple. Very simple. Mojibri is an ink splat that loves to sing the lyrics he writes. He does this by strutting on the spot as a circular series of clouds and stones revolve



What happens when a ink splay suffers an almighty prolapse.



Mojibri has already written this line, he'll sing it anyway until you come back to an unfinished passage. He so cool yes!



Gentlemen, we've all had days like this when the only way out is to love your woman the best you can.





VERDICT

LOOKS

SOUND



GAMEPLAY





There's plenty of fun to be had here - if only it

OR YOU COULD TRY





Originality meets simplicity in an ink well and we are very happy. If you see quality as being directly linked to the number of buttons used in game then you'll no doubt hate this little gem. Certainly not one for those in the Manhunt brigade.



AP'N'EASE RUL

Once you've remembered that the Japanese read from right to left, working out how to work the game comes easily - but it does require some patience. Don't expect the instruction booklet

to help you any more than to remind you how different Japanese culture is from our own either. Check out this section and try and work out what it means. Clue: We've worked out that those orange circles represent how many lines of the song have yet to be sung. They sit on Mojibri's head as he struts. See, it's easy when you know how







Each level's music has its own mood and style, all are catchy and all sound great played on headphones during a massacre



The graphics are made to look as if painted on calligraphy paper so zero points for photorealism, then.



Don't ask why the background is full of random objects that fly about the place. To do so would be to dance with madness.

features many sweet touches that we'd

piece of interactive art than something

enjoyed purely as a game. Small detail -

suggest bring the title more in line with a

beneath his feet. As Mojibri writes, so his brush inks the clouds with letters that form words and sentences that, thanks to a rather spooky Hiragana-to-speech voice, sounds like Steven Hawking possessed by the bastard child of Kylie Minogue and a Teletubby.

Mojibri only has a finite amount of ink with which to write his sonnet. Ink is lost from his brush's reserve as you write, or if Mojibri fails to start writing at the start of a word, which will result him falling over a stone. Loose all your ink and you will devolve into one of two other forms. One regression sees you putting on weight, the next, and last, will have you pooped into your final onion/gonad form. Should Mojibri do well, he will evolve into what we can only be described as a 'higher self'. This is essentially Mojibri but as if he has been drawn as a religious icon. A nimbus surrounds him, he looks like a god - it works. Hmmm. Abstract stuff indeed, but then again - isn't love? Think about that one at least until the next paragraph.

All this brush on/brush off nonsense sounds rather complicated. But don't worry, it isn't, since using just one analogue stick and one analogue stick only controls the game. Push up to add ink to your brush, pull down to begin

writing. As the rest is timing, that's it. There is a little more detail to it than that, but nothing that will make what is easily the world's simplest game any trickier to comprehend. As mentioned, if you're too late or early in starting your word you will fall over. If you stop writing too soon, you will lose the whole word, too late and you will smudge the last letter and loose points. Don't ink your brush and your

you can sing as one of three characters: Moiibri, a robot or a female Moiibri, Each character comes with their own evolutions and singing voice, but none represent as fundamentally huge an addition as the game's ability to read emails.

EACH CHARACTER COMES WITH THEIR OWN SINGING VOICE, BUT NONE REPRESENT AS HUGE AN ADDITION AS THE GAME'S ABILITY TO READ EMAILS

writing will be light and scratchy, ink for too long and it will be too thick.

It's simple, but that doesn't mean it doesn't take a great deal of skill if you want to go for maximum score. And when you're low on ink and Moiibri is in his bulbous form, you only have one chance to get the last word or you'll lose - here you will know the meaning of tense. As with all timing/rhythm games, it's all about keeping your groove flowing. Get irate or let your sweaty thumb slip from the stick and you will flounder. This hurts.

As with other games by (orchestral chord) Masaya Matsurra, Mojibribon

That's right, if you understand Japanese, have a suitable connection and want to email other Japanese understanding PS2 owners then they can 'play' your emails. Mojibri will sing them. You can earn the right to write your own lyrics too, which can only be seen as something resoundingly brilliant. If you can understand Hiragana.

We don't, hence the score. If (read: IF!) Mojibribon were to get a PAL release, Mojibri is going to have to have English lessons. But if you want to hear his true relaxing, hypnotic mild yet tense flava, get him on import.

PlayStation.2 TRANSFORMERS

TRANSFORMERS

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Atari | DEVELOPER: Melbourne House | PRICE: \$89.95 RATING: G8+ | WEB SITE: www.atari.com.au







IN THE KNOW

- Based on the Transformers Armada
- Slick 60hz refresh rate makes for
- Only three selectable autobots

RIOR FORM

Melbourne House has been making games since the Eighties when it delighted us all with such 8bit classics as Way Of The Exploding Fist. Recently its been thrilling those who couldn't find a copy of Splinter Cell with the borderline lawsuit/homage that was Mission Impossible



RELEASE DATE

» IF THIS

A MEMORY II WOULD BE A

ou remember every summer as sunny but a time machine would show you that it did actually rain rather a lot.

STAND OUT MOMENTS



ted tov-marine









SFORME

GAMEPLAY IN DISGUISE? HA! JUST KIDDING

ne million years ago Cybertron... is a world at war. Yes, possibly the world's most uneducational toy gets film-length adverts, a new TV series in the form of Transformers Armada and now a game based on that very same show. One million years and they choose to disguise themselves as 20th Century vehicles? This is the exact point where we stop worrying about the show, toys or who would win in a battle in a no-holds barred romp between Hasbro and Mattel and state that we're

going to treat this as a 'mech' game, pure and simple. Why? If we hear one more coworker babbling words to the effect of "Transformers? Cool!" we're going to cry. Look, it's a mech game. Think Armoured Core meets Gran Tursimo with some of the most impressive landscapes the PlayStation2 has ever hosted and you've got the game. If you're a fan of the show then you're going to get more enjoyment, sure. The title uses the licence with zeal, the robots are beautifully rendered with an

excellent sense of solidity, and they even have their own rag-doll physics. You've not seen a game based on a toy look this good, you really haven't.

Level one pulls no punches in demonstrating what the graphics engine can do. It's is a massive Amazonian forest, a forest with thousands of trees. Not treetextured blocks, genuine tree-like trees just like momma nature makes. This vast biomass covers hills and valleys, real hills and valleys as well, not background bitmaps



Level two and it's time to quit your grinning and reach for the sunglasses to avoid becoming snow blind. sunglasses to avoid becor



The lighting effects are spot on, giving perfect lens flair complete with the occasional rainbow.



The trees are great and the grass is the closest thing to sex we've ever seen but the game's just not a wower

PLAYTIME

- Whoa! Nice graphics!Excellent spatial sound effects. Nicely integrated controls that vith the Minic





BAD POINTS

- Go here, shoot those, go
- Level variety is questionable.
 Get hit down mountain,



Behold Hotshot, Autobot from the planet Cybertr and fan of transatiantic 'dude' speak.



You may notice that there is more screen shots of this level



ne as you'd expect for a great big heavy lump of die-cast metal

but a real landscape where you can travel anywhere you can see. We've never rated a game on its first level's topographical style but here we go anyway - ten out of ten. It's so swish that we want it used as the setting for more games. Hell, someone must own the Rambo licence. The possibilities for such a setting are endless and it does seem odd that the game that showcases its glory is based on giant robots that can transform into vehicles. But now for a more holistic approach to this review - we've got the stage so how about the play?

There are three Transformers to choose from; Red Alert, Hot Shot and the biggest mother trucker of them all, Optimus Prime. Each has its own rate of fire, top speed and agility and each can transform into their vehicular counterparts (an ambulance, sports car and big mother truck - respectively) at any time. These transformations don't give you any more abilities other than giving you a motor vehicle to control at the tap of a button with the choice of character being purely an aesthetic decision other than the general rule that the faster and more nimble your 'bot is, the less damage it can give or take. Speeding toward a herd of Decepticlones, the game's disposablefodder versions of your enemies, the Decepticons, enables you to build up

enough momentum to smash through them bowling ball style. Then you can flip out of vehicle form, skid to a halt as you spin round and bring your weapon systems to bare on the remaining disarray. When performed to the right crowd, this move will get the "Transformers? Cool!" reaction every time.

There's no doubt that that Transformers looks the part. Missile strikes feel heavy as the impact sends 'bots flying - you can even get punched from one end of the level to the other should you take a full force slap. Below this obvious excellence lies the actual game which, when

Suddenly the beauty of nature isn't enough to carry this game into the classic realm.

Start level, go to waypoint, kill various Decepticiones and then fight a boss character. This is standard shoot-'em-up fare where you'll find yourself racing around on wheels, transforming and killing up close or from range (via a sniper mode, naturally) that's diluted by some additions that are far too clichéd. Level one is a forest, could level two be the snow level by any chance? Oh ves, a big blurry white snow section that can be seen as the exact opposite of all that was fantabulous about level one. After a few hours of play the excitement of level one still

THERE'S NO DOUBT THAT IT LOOKS THE PART. MISSILE STRIKES FEEL HEAVY AS THE IMPACT SENDS 'BOTS FLYING

compared to other 'mech' games, comes out as basic and lacking in depth. If you've ever circled an enemy while blasting away, then you get the idea of how simple and uninspiring this can be. By collecting powerups, or 'Minicons' as the game calls them, you can improve your abilities and weapon set to the point where you can glide between areas, fire multiple rockets and even invoke a slow-motion mode where your shots are more powerful. This costs you energy and seems to be included because, hey, slow-motion is cool - right?

hasn't been built upon making you feel that your first slice of action will be much the same as your last. If you're looking for a Transformers game then you'll be more than content since the game is slick and full of action although it really is lacking any of the real smarts that make other 'mech' games more than the simple shooters they could be. While this is infinitely superior to Robotech: Battlecry, it's lacks the subtle mix of arcade and strategy that made Gungriffon Blaze such an excellent yet shabbier bargain-basket bargain.

EYED MONSTER (TRUCK/ROBOT?



w a fuse! Zing boom! The devil cuts loose! om! So what's the use? Wam bam!



. It's oh, so quiet. It's oh,

The game's first-person view mode enables you to move while shooting, an ability something Solid Snake is still waiting for. Not only can you zoom in, you can use a sniper-mode pick-up that enables you to destroy an enemy with a few well-placed shots to the head. These view modes are integrated well and allow for more tactical play as you use trees for concealment. It's like a Hasbro version of Vietnam. Maybe.

VERDICT

LOOKS



SOLIND



GAMEPI AV



LONG TERM



OIII D



Looking its age but it still manages to give you a rea



SUMMARY

A stout and dependable title that initially seems groundbreaking but quickly comes to rest amongst better and similar 'mech' titles that have featured on the PlayStation2 since year one. Fans of Armada and great visuals have been served well though. Very well.





ALIAS

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Acclaim | DEVELOPER: In-house | PRICE: \$79.95 RATING: M15+ | WEB SITE: www.acclaimau.com







Memory Card Dual Shock 2

IN THE KNOW

- Official script and voice acting from the
- Environmental weapons
- _Ten spy gadgets to use and let's face it, we can never get enough of them.



VERDICT



Occasionally surprises but doesn't exactly push the

SOUND



ruined by pretty lacklust sound effects.

GAMEPLAY



tarts off promisingly nough, but gets far too oring far too quickly



You're going to have this one back at the shop long before

OR YOU COULD TRY



DARK ANGE

A very confused game that doesn't seem to know what it wants to be.



BUFFY: CHAOS BLEEDS

Play as Buffy, Willow and the other members of the Scooby gang. Great. 80%

SUMMARY

We can understand the 'attraction' for the Alias groupies but, in all honesty, we doubt that anyone would manage to stay with this game beyond the first level. It fails to excite and, more importantly, offers absolutely nothing original in the way of gameplay.





RELEASE DATE OUT NOW

» IF THIS

A CONSPIRACY SHOW IT WOULD BE X-FILES SEASON 9

It started out great but now the whole conspiracy thing is a bit dull and as a result each episode just comes off as predictably average, just like Alias the game.





The opening level of the game has a true spy setting – a casino.



Your first task is to mee your contact who has a new toy for you.



using your cover as a waitress, you then have to spike a drink...



...which you then give to this gentleman. Objective

PLAYTIME





[A] If she was MacGyver she'd be able to finish her mission objective in



Just to be on the safe side, the guards prod her body with some long red sticks. Oh no, hang on, those are supposed to be lasers, aren't they?

ALIAS

THIS GAME WON'T BE GARNER-ING ANY AWARDS

t was only a matter of time before Alias became a videogame. It seems like just about every other spy/conspiracy-based TV series has made the leap. Unfortunately for this particular franchise, it appears to be a leap of faith based entirely on the fanbase of the show. This certainly isn't aimed at any serious gamer.

This game is by-the-book average. You've got your token stealth elements (although there are no body-hiding elements), some action moments and a healthy amount of uninspired gadget use, all of which fail to offer anything that hasn't been seen a gazillion times before.

This isn't helped by the fact that the game is, well, tedious. The action moments, when they happen, don't degrade into button-bashing – they're that way from the start. This is a shame

because there are some very pretty moves you can perform – at one moment we smashed some generic goon's face into a nearby table, knocking him out cold.

We'd love to say this was totally intentional, but it just kind of happened whilst we were alternating (read: bashing) between the attack buttons.

You're forced into this button rattling because the controls are generally quite clunky, something

to when you try to tackle some stairs – normally you can run freely, but when you get to a set of stairs it's tip-toe time. Worse yet, you always stand up on a set of stairs, completely ruining the chance for stealth in some areas.

If things do go wrong (as they frequently do in *Alias*) then you need not worry too much because there are regular save points and your health even regenerates. It's almost as if the developer knew

THERE ARE REGULAR SAVE POINTS AND YOUR HEALTH EVEN REGENERATES

that is very noticeable when you're moving around. The animation itself is fine but the interaction with the environment feels very forced. For example, get to a door you want to open and you need to be right in front of the handle to open it. This is nothing compared

the game was clunky to play, as you certainly don't need the health or save points – the game is far too simple anyway. Sadly, every single part of this game seems average and we can't help but feel that the fans are going to be let down.





PlayStation.2 SERIOUS DSAM

SERIOUS SAM: NEXT ENCOUNTER

INFORMATION .

PUBLISHER: Take Two | DEVELOPER: Climax | PRICE: \$49.95 RATING: MA15+ | WEB SITE: www.take2games.com.au







IN THE KNOW

Play with up to eight players online.

Features 2 player split screen co-op and

et in different time periods including ncient Rome, Feudal China and Atlantis



VERDICT













What the original TimeSplitters wa

Splitters was sup - if they'd had th ISSUE 95



QUAKE III REVOLUTION

The classic arena based FPS in most of its glory, although no

SUMMARY

Whether you regard it as an earnest homage or a blatant pastiche, Serious Sam: Next Encounter's back to basics approach firmly reintroduces, if somewhat unnecessarily so. the shooter element of the FPS genre. There's no stealth, no squads, just serious amounts of good old action.







GAME

A GUN IT WOULD BE A GATLING GUN

Because like the M134 Minigun, M61 Vulcan or GAU-8/A Avenger it spews out more bullets than you sickeningly short space of time.

STAND OUT MOMENTS









You thought the kills would slow down?

PLAYTIME







Rotating platforms over lava, a yellow arrow pointing to a switch. It's strange what we take for granted in the world of videogames.

OUS SA

IT'S A BLAST. ARE WE JOKING? NO, WE'RE SERIOUS

ou've played this game before you know, or rather, you've more than likely played a game whose constituent parts could be cut and pasted neatly into one of Serious Sam's poster-paint explosion levels. So have we hell, we've even written this review before. So it's first-person shooter time again - one man against the entire bowels of hell. This time around though, the twist is that lead character Duke Nukem spouts dry, pop-culture soaked witticisms between expelling rounds of ammunition. Sorry, unread 'Duke Nukem' and re-read with the words 'Serious Sam' instead.

You can see where we're going with this, so we'll cut the joke short, because it's a slightly flawed analogy. In actual fact, Serious Sam is like a Jive Bunny Master Mix of old first-person shooters, say Duke Nukem, Doom, Quake et al but played back at 130 beats per minute. with a whole slew of additional

samples thrown in for good measure. In many ways Serious Sam reminds us of a time when the latest PC first-person shooters were distributed as freeware - you played it to your heart's content for a while and either forgot about it or stumped up the cash for the final version. Serious Sam gets as close as possible to this ideal in today's market - it costs just \$50.

preference lies with the former then Serious Sam's approach will leave you disgusted at the primitive visuals on offer. Players bred on a diet of 2D shoot-'emups will feel at home in a jiffy however; enemy speed and attack patterns recall the halcyon days of Salamander or R-Type and dictate a pace of play at odds with titles such as Medal Of Honor or World War Zero - back

YOU WON'T BE SIGHING 'THEY DON'T MAKE 'EM LIKE THEY USED TO' AFTER PLAYING SAM

Going into detail on the various denizens, weapons or levels thrown your way in Serious Sam is a fairly pointless exercise as the inspiration for them drawn from countless games for a reason - to reinforce a feeling of nostalgic fun. But you won't be sighing 'they don't make 'em like they used to' after playing Sam, more 'they never used to make them like this'. Eye candy or break-neck speed? If your

pedal, strafe, listen out for marauding beasts behind you and adjust accordingly. And watch the combos wrack up the body count on offer is higher than any freeware first-person shooter, even with a relatively small one-player game - and to the power ten of anything released in the past few years, especially considering it's online play. Nope, they never made 'em like this.









VAN HELSING

INFORMATION =

PUBLISHER: VU Games | DEVELOPER: Sapphire Studios | PRICE: \$99.95 | RATING: M15+ | WEB SITE: www.vugames.com.au









IN THE KNOW

- Based on Universal's blockbuster
- Voiced by Hugh 'Wolverine'
- Likenesses are excellent.

PRIOR FORM

We said this game was begging to be compared to *Devil May Cry*, and naturally, it has been. The big, bad characters that were anticipated are all here, making the game an unusually enjoyable romp through the world of the film. Nothing original, but then again, this isn't necessarily a minus point.



RELEASE DATE

» IF THIS

A FAMOUS INVENTOR IT WOULD BE ELISHA GRAY

Graham Bell Invented the telephone. Coming in second with an inferior model has meant that Elisha Gray remains as nothing more than an imitator.

> FIRST LEVEL

oducing Dr Van sing. He looks ar ul lot like Wolve

pite the pistol he

Mr Hyde is the first of the creatures Van Hels

Turns out Hyde is a jessie at heart and he starts to run away.

PLAYTIME



Luminous green is hardly going to loosen your bowels but killing zombie-things is pretty damn satisfying.



The environments do add a gothic charm to the game, with this particular area looking like the inner-workings of Tim Burton's mind.

SIN

VAN

DEVIL WILL CRY

o you own the license for three of history's greatest and most feared horror villains. What do you do? Make a film of course, with lashings of special effects and that Jackman bloke who played Wolverine in the X-Men films. What next? Oh, you own a videogame publishing division. Well, you'd better start making the game of the film to bag those extra bucks from the console-owning public. What's that? The game's derivative rubbish; cobbled together out of other people's ideas and bits of leftover code? Who cares, it's already made us a mint. Looks like VU Games thought this through, but came up with a slight snag... Sapphire Studios had crafted quite a good game.

Van Helsing is in no way, shape or form based on historical fact. And we're pretty sure the radical thinking man of science from Bram Stoker's classic gothic tale, conceived out of the Victorian fears of purity and the need for a damn good scare, did not blow his enemies away with a six-shooter and

explosive Holy Crosses. However, if games have taught us all one thing, it's that history is for books, and fantasy is best found roaming wild on the plains of the PS2. Curiously this ensures that the trite, bloodthirsty plot of Van Helsing slots neatly into its videogame counterpart. Basically, our Van is on a mission on behalf of the Vatican to rid the world of Dracula's dynasty, thereby assisting the foxy Anna, whose family has been on a similar task for generations.

the gamer and hold the atmosphere. Whereas the scenery isn't as great as — (plucking a name out of the air — Devil May Cry, this isn't too much of a problem as the focus of the game is on the action. Invisible walls are taken as a given in action games, perhaps so much so that they should be listed on the packaging, however, in Van Helsing they are particularly prevalent. The other major annoyance of the game is the way it loads around every corner, eliminating

ONE OF THE BEST FILM LICENSES COMMITTED TO CONSOLE IN YEARS. MAKE OF THAT WHAT YOU WILL

As the lead character actually resembles and was voiced by the Jackman himself, the game manages to immerse the player into the atmosphere of the film with aplomb.

Visually speaking, the high-achieving doesn't end with the character models, as the backgrounds are suitably foreboding and rich enough to impress

any sense of enjoyment that can be built up from the generally frantic action that forms the majority of the title.

In fact, in terms of actual shooting, stabbing and impaling, this is a top-notch title, as the fights bring new meaning to the overused term 'fast and furious'. Similar to the style employed by, you guessed it, *Devil May Cry*, our manly



The congregation started to turn tail and run when the socalled 'man of the church' pulled out his six-shooter.



Buying new weapons with massive amounts of green glyphs encourages the player to smash open every last crate.



This ghostly fella is one of the least terrifying gameghosts we've ever seen.

- the game with some





BAD POINTS

VERDICT

LOOKS



SOUND



GAMEPLAY



LONG TERM



YOU



93%



SUMMARY

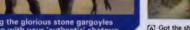
Falls short of Devil May Cry's sheer adrenal action, but avoids falling into the great chasm of money-spinning laziness that has ensnared so many recent film tie-ins. This game should be a decent enough treat for those finding themselves craving more Helsing after the film.



The game's camera can be rather awkward at times, needlessly distancing you from Van's antics.

There are many elements to Van Helsing that have been created specifically for the game in order to flesh out the back-story to the film. However, this is not done in a pretentious Matrix-esque manner, but in a way that adds optional depth to the franchise. This game specific content comes in the form of new creatures, such as the rather disappointing stone gargoyles, banshees and fell spirits. We're also fairly certain that Van Helsing doesn't wander round collecting thousands of glyphs in the motion picture, nor does he come across a personal Gatling cannon.







gun, and we intend to use it with extreme



The monsters are nicely designed, getting the right balance between ugly and threatening.



Wow, collecting stuff! This is an amazing idea! Why has no one thought of doing this before?! We want to see this in every single game made from now on!

The one aspect of the presentation that does warrant attention, however,

make the game far less enjoyable than

is the camera, which true to third-

person shooter form, manages to

it really should be. Where action is

concerned, this isn't such a problem,

but when solving puzzles the camera

Dracula and all his undead minions

combined. Whereas this isn't the end

of the world, it can become frustrating

this and a few other niggling flaws, Van

console in the past few years. Make of

as the puzzles become more difficult

later in the game. However, despite

Helsing has to qualify as one of the

best film licenses committed to

that what you will.

can prove a greater enemy than

protagonist has to defeat hordes of undead foes through frantic combinations of pistol fire and bladeplay. The list of attainable weapons is incredibly impressive, keeping the action varied and exciting right through the large number of levels available. However, it all boils down to the fact that combat doesn't feel as solid as the game it takes after. Once you've wielded Dante's enormous swords and flesh-shattering pistols, Van Helsing feels somewhat out-gunned.

This seems a real shame, as the developer of Van Helsing appears to have made a real effort with the presentation of this title, and for the most part, the folks at Sapphire have been incredibly successful. Hearing

Jackman's voice in the game is a real plus, and this alone really sets it apart from the shameless cash-in crowd. The interaction between cinematics and action is well balanced, meaning that players never have to sit through hours of dull pondering and procrastination as the publisher seeks to squeeze the last drop out of the license. The creatures are truly hideous and inventive, well in keeping with the general mood of the game, making the admittedly repetitive action seem fresh and challenging at every stage. Rounding off the levels, the boss fights are incredibly DMC-esque, and as such, offer a different set of challenges to players who might be weary of hammering away at 10 for the last thirty minutes.



Once you grow tired of collecting green stuff, why not start looking for red items? Variety is the spice of life after all.





An egg shaped hole. Wonder if that funny egg-shaped rock we picked up a while ago has any significance here?



TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

INFORMATION

PUBLISHER: Konami | DEVELOPER: In-house | PRICE: \$99.95 RATING: G8+ | WEB SITE: www.atari.com.au









IN THE KNOW

Originally the turtles started out as an ironic comic reacting against stupid comics about stupid superpowers.

This game is totally unradical



VERDICT .





RELEASE DATE OUT NOW

AN ALBUM IT WOULD BE DIDO'S LIFE FOR RENT

Because it's the same brief few seconds of laziness repeated over and over again

STAND OUT MOMENTS



Leonardo leads, Donatello does machines. That's a fact Jack. Raphael's cool but crude. Gimme a break. Michelangelo is a party dude. Party II



These onomatopoeia lie. The action is not fun and it is not colourful. It is larme repetitive and as impotent as a mutated turtle.

AGE MU

T-U-R-T-L-E POOR! T-U-R-T-L-E POOR!

hen Peter Laird and Kevin Eastman created the Teenage Mutant Ninia Turtles it was intended to be an absurd piss-take of the increasingly ridiculous climate of superheroes in the mass media. Of course, as is often the case, the irony got lost somewhere along the way to the bank, Consequently, TMNT became a massive hit in the Eighties and inevitably, a huge retro-phenomenon in recent years. Konami still holds the license to the oozed-up amphibians and so a videogame was equally inevitable. Unsurprisingly, it's still an irony-free franchise. Unfortunately, it's also a fun-free one as well.

Scrolling beat-'em-ups were at their peak around the time Turtles first aired so you'd be forgiven for thinking that Konami thought that the format was out of date by now. Sadly, this isn't the case. Seemingly convinced that a few cel-shaded characters, the ability to scroll up and down rather than merely left to right (thanks 3D!) and a Point Break vocabulary is all

that's needed to resurrect the genre, Konami has really passed up the opportunity to do something even remotely mediocre.

By the time you get your particular fearsome fighter to their second batch of moronic hoodlums and robots, you probably would have mastered the two or three combos on offer and begun to wonder about a few

controls are smooth as well, although it would admittedly be pretty hard to ruin something as simple as the controls to what amounts to being nothing more than a scrolling beat-'em-up. And that, ludicrously, is it as far as TMNT's positives go. Well, that and the following pun: hardly a reason to shell-out (groan) a cool \$100 for a game is it?

KONAMI HAVE PASSED UP THE CHANCE TO DO SOMETHING EVEN REMOTELY MEDIOCRE

things: Is this all there is to do? I thought these guys were ninja, why can't they act like it? Why is it only two player? Am I tired or is it just that boring? The respective answers are as follows: Yes, we have no idea, ditto and yes, it is just that boring.

TMNT is, however, still a pretty looking game with the cel-shaded style aping the heroes in a halfshell's latest animated incarnation very well indeed. The

It's a shame that with the excellent Transformers on the shelves we have to be so violently reminded of the countless poor licenses that continue to plague the industry. It's worth considering that if Eastman and Laird had been videogame developers, they may well have made a game that spoofed generic videogame adaptations of TV programmes. Ironically, TMNT would be prime subject matter.



LOOKS

SOUND



GAMEPLAY



OR YOU COULD TRY



emi-solid co-op sw ashing fun of an ob verrated license.



SUMMARY

Some nice visuals fail to disguise what is essentially a scrolling beat-'em-up, which wouldn't be a huge problem if it wasn't such a boring, repetitive one that fails to ever ignite into anything as cool or as fun as its license. Avoid as you would living in sewers.







You'll welcome this particular screen.

PLAYTIME







PlayStation 2

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP RUGBY

INFORMATION |

PUBLISHER: Acclaim | DEVELOPER: Swordfish | PRICE: \$79.95 RATING: G | WER SITE: WA







IN THE KNOW

sed on the much-loved Jonah Lomu probably still the best rugby game ever

ly the English and Welsh teams are fully ugh you'll notice some striking etween non-licenced players and



VERDICT



SOUND



strong point. Where's the

GAMEPLAY

on but a bundle of fun

LONG TERM







A game that gets the pace of the game right, if not the technicalities. 78%



IUGBY LEAGUE If you prefer the 13-man

game – or even if you don't – this is worth a try.

It lacks a little polish, but overall we found World Championship Rugby is a solid, enjoyable game. Despite feeling rushed it offers a good game of running rugby - just the thing to beat those rotten Englishmen with...





A CUISINE IT

Because it's very tasty and quite filling, but after a while, you find yourself wanting more.

STAND OUT MOMENTS

1895

The try is on in the

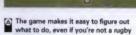
Playing the Kiwis is

As is chasing the

This is hard... but good when it works







WORLD CHAMPIONSH GBY JUST WAIT TILL 2007...

loody Johnny Wilkinson. It was probably (though it pains us to admit it) fitting that he kicked the winning field goal that gave the Rugby World Cup to England... well played, the best team won etc. But what's really annoying is that although the English and Welsh rugby unions agreed to let their teams be licenced for World Championship Rugby, no other unions did. Union? Yeah, right.

But we're quibbling here. World Championship Rugby, based on the much-loved Jonah Lomu Rugby and brought to us by Swordfish, is a fine, entertaining game that favours fun rather than simulation. Still, it manages to do something that many Southern hemisphere teams (including the English) have trouble with mixing up running plays with tactical kicking.

Rugby is a very technical game but Swordfish have done a good job of keeping things manageable. On-screen displays help remind you of the controls

you need to use in scrums, rucks. mauls and lineouts. One weakness is goalkicking, either from the ground or on the run. The camera really doesn't help you much and we found it hard to get consistent results.

One area that can really help a sports title is that elusive thing known as atmosphere. Breaking it down, it's a combination of

more a reflection on English commentary than on the game design.

The game has plenty of modes to keep you busy. You can play friendlies plus leagues and campionships (due to the lack of a licence they can't call them by their real names) and, perhaps most interestingly of all, there are historical challenge matches. In

BASED ON THE MUCH-LOVED JONAH LOMU RUGBY... A FINE, ENTERTAINING GAME

sound, graphics, commentary and 'feel'. World Championship Rugby doesn't really excel in any of these areas, but it's certainly a workman-like effort. The players aren't super-detailed but the animations are quite fluid and overall the game looks good. The crowd sounds dead - even when you're about to win an improbably, come-from-behind victory - and the commentary is quite low-key, but perhaps that's

these, you take charge of a team at a pivotal moment in a historic match and must meet a specific challenge (scoring in certain combinations etc). Definitely one for the hard-core rugby nuts.

Overall we enjoyed our time with World Championship Rugby and can heartily recommend it to sports game fans who want a change from soccer, baseball and gridiron.





PlayStation 2

SINGSTAR

INFORMATION |

PUBLISHER: Sony | DEVELOPER: In-house | PRICE: \$99.95 RATING: G | WEB SITE: au.playstation.com







TIME 03:08

IN THE KNOW

- Vocals chords required although vocal talent is optional
- Comes with two microphones
- Could be absolute torture in the

After EyeToy, this is Sony's latest attempt to get non-ga money into the videogames industry and wrestle the pe ry into the videogames industry and wrestle the periph-base ng market away from the Konami. Ironically, SingStar will be



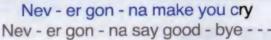


» IF THIS GAME WAS

A DREAM IT WOULD BE THE ONE WHERE YOU GO TO SCHOOL NAKED AND **EVERYBODY LAUGHS**

Because to get the most out of this game you'll have to not mind that dream.







Groove is in the Groove is in





GROOVE IS IN THE ART warning to any PS2-loving gamers to it. Of course, this is also SingStar 's who share a house with 'fun' biggest draw - that any idiot with the power people (particularly girls): buying of speech can get up and belt out a SingStar might in the long run equate to cacophonic rendition of Take On Me means that the game will not exclude anyone 'giving' your console to your housemates whenever they are drunk or bored. It'll make regardless of talent or confidence. And after listening back to a few of our own you popular, for sure, but you may never get a good night's sleep again. Y'see, SingStar performances, play™ can only describe this is one of those games that will appeal to as a good thing. non-gamers as much as someone whose

The set-up could barely be any easier to grasp: you choose a song and the accompanying video plays, with the lyrics displayed line by line at the bottom of the screen. All that's left for you to do is to sing along with the track as it plays, attempting to match each note up to the pitch meter running across the middle of the screen. As well as the standard karaoke Singalong

mode and competitive and cooperative Multiplayer modes, the main feature of the game is Career mode, which requires you to travel from club to club, impressing the crowds and accruing 'Buzz' points until you can progress to the next level of notoriety the ultimate goal being to pack out a stadium with your half-baked Daniel Bedingfield whine.

From a library of 29 songs - ranging from the early Eighties to the present day there's bound to be something in here to get your juices flowing, as well as a fair few that will cut through you like a dentist's drill (YMCA, anyone?). Unfortunately, as Career mode allocates the songs to a particular venue, and prohibits repeated attempts at the same song, you're going to have to sing



Each location has six songs, but if you want to be a superstar you're gonna have to sing them all once - even Westlife.

life revolves around videogames - perhaps

even more so. We can see the scenario

now - after arriving in from the pub, you

think "I know, I'll show everyone SingStar",

decided never to play any other game ever again, and to leave your PS2 in the living

only to discover that you've inadvertently



Modern 'punk', characterised not by political dissatisfaction and the rejection of culture, but by misuse of the apostrophe suse of the apostrophe.



This is the type of lifeless, spring-break-looking dive you'll be expected to perform in. Nice block colouring, though.

GOOD POINTS A proper party game that will without doubt be popular barbecue entertainment. Immediately enjoyable. A broad range of songs to choose from.





VERDICT



Stylised locations and full motion video both flesh out



Again does its job, but more eplay options would have



You sing - that's it. If you can't do that then exchange



f Sony releases more song discs then *SingStar* should

OR YOU COULD TRY



EYETOY: PLAY

A wonderful experience that's surely tied to the future of gaming.



POP IDO

All the joys of bad singing without having to actually issue a single note.

SUMMARY

SingStar treads new ground for a console title and does it with confidence and gusto, with the two mics being of surprisingly good quality. Despite being huge fun, however, it is less a game of skill than it is an excuse for everyone to get together and humiliate themselves in front of others.





heart - - - - he heart - -

something that makes you want to gag sooner or later. Thankfully, there are no extra points given for singing the lyrics correctly, so in these circumstances you can just spit a torrent of abuse at the artist along to the tune of the song and still leave the venue to rapturous applause.

The lack of speech recognition also ensures that you don't have to pronounce any of your words properly, so if you can't read quick enough to keep up with the chorus to Busted's Crashed The Wedding, then you can simply mumble your way through. Equally, if you want to sing Dido's Thank You just like on the original record, you are permitted to project the notes directly from your nasal cavity rather than from the mouth. Class.

Songs can be replayed in their entirety, and saved onto a memory card for posterity. Sony has also included a couple of voice effects – Deep Daddy (which drops an octave, making you sound like the echoey ghost of Barry White) or a high-pitched chipmunk squeak at the other end



BUYING SINGSTAR MIGHT EQUATE TO 'GIVING' YOUR PS2 TO HOUSEMATES WHEN THEY ARE DRUNK OR BORED

of the scale. You can also drop the original artist out of the mix and add reverb to your own voice, but all these options are so limited we can't imagine people playing with them a week later. Besides, nobody was going to buy *SingStar* for use as a legitimate music-recording tool – it's been designed solely for fun, and to this end it does a fantastic job.

There are a few niggles, however. The first is that while Sony has worked hard to transcribe all the songs, the rigid structure of the stave design doesn't really allow you to warble or single with any flamboyance while being scored. And while most gamers would probably struggle just to hit any of the notes in The Darkness' I Believe in a Thing Called Love, anyone who fancies themselves as some sort of future-star may well feel their individuality is being watered

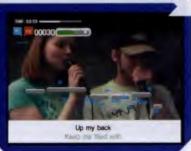
down by a game unable to differentiate between eccentricity and error. Also the blobs on the screen that represent the notes are pretty fat, making it more of an approximation than expected, and therefore unlikely to serve any purpose as a vocal coach. It's a further shame that the Duet mode asks both contestants to sing the same vocal part rather than harmonise, but we were probably asking a little too much bere.

As a complete unit, SingStar offers excellent value-for-money, including two microphones in the box for the price of a regular game – actually, come to think of it, that's the price of countless awful games as well – and it is hard to imagine that it won't be a resounding success for Sony when it hits the shelves. Even if it does feel a bit awkward at first.

VIDEO KILLED THE RADIO STAR

As an extra bonus, Sony has made SingStar compatible with EyeToy, so you can watch yourself perform as you sing rather than view a song's promo video. Each song has a series of 'key' notes that need to be hit, at which point the PS2 will save a short video snapshot of your attempt to hit the note while looking casual. Sadly, unless you know the lyrics to the song you are reciting, each snapshot finds you looking at the screen rather than making some sexy eye contact with the camera, often leaving you looking bewildered and uncomfortable. Or maybe that's just us.







THE SUFFERING

INFORMATION .

PUBLISHER: Midway | DEVELOPER: Surreal Software | PRICE: \$99.95 AGE RATING: MA15+ | WEB SITE: www.midway.com







Dual Shock

IN THE KNOW

- The splashed blood of victims
- _Creatures designed by Stan
 'I designed *The Predator!*' Winston
- Features 'adult' language.

PRIOR FORM

Midway has been here all our gaming lives and we love them like a father. A father that has an embarrassing taste in music and a penchant for dancing at our parties, that is.



RELEASE DATE OUT NOW

» IF THIS GAME WAS

A MOVIE

You'd probably rent it after you've sat through a weekend of drinking ethylated gin and watching all four Phantasm movies. Back. To. Back.



Suffering with migraines? Then try Anadin Extra for quick, pain release.



Midway obviously thought that holy-goddamn-brightred would be the scariest colour for blood.



STAND OUT MOMENTS



outfit. Don't worry, he's quite armless.



We've got a gun and the muzzle flare makes us believe we're in for a treat



he movement pattern of ne enemies shows a decen nderstanding of motion.



Man and machine, as God intended, but this time within a mediocre game.

THE SUFFERING

SWEET JESUS, THE SUFFERING

brief digression; did you know we are currently living in the year when Hellraiser VIII will be released? The terrifyingly comprehensive Internet Movie Data Base shows that some reviewer has decided that it is a "Unique and good idea, and better than Infermo and Hellseeker." We haven't seen this film and as it doesn't exist, no one has, but that won't stop us suggesting that it will be the most effective use of a tired story arc, food dye and corn syrup you will ever see this side of a Mel Gibson take on the Qu'ran. At least it would

be if this latest Midway bloodbath title were your only point of reference.

Midway don't hold back on the anti-hero front and start layering on the gloom early on. You play a man named Torque, a real Neil Young-look-a-like mother lover who's been placed on death row for brutally murdering his wife and kids. What follows is a heartfelt mediation on life/death and whether it is ever justifiable to kill that follows on where Krzysztof Kielowski's masterpiece, A Short Film About Killing, left off. Ha! Only joking! No, you're in prison surrounded by

perpetrators equipped with propensity to profanity, these dudes just love to swear and we'd like to give a special nod to references to sexual intercourse with infants and slang for the female pudenda. Well hooray from games that aren't afraid to say "****".

Some of these foul-mouthed fellows reckon that your crimes require you to get beaten to death even though they know you're going to face a lethal injection anyway and we, the player, don't know if our onscreen counterpart is guilty or not. The lights dim, people start screaming as unnatural shapes twist out of the dark with knives for limbs and our hero finds himself let out of his cell with only a handy plot device to save him from yet another Clive Barker-esque bladed bondage death.

THE SUFFERING ATTEMPTS TO MAKE A ROUTINE THIRD AND FIRST-PERSON SHOOT-'EM-UP A TERRIFYING PROSPECT



The inmates were gutted when the prostitute they'd ordered off the Internet turned out to be some kind of bitch-beast.



Just look at how well lit the cellblock is next to our dark protagonist. It's art we tell you, Midway style. Probably.



"I see dead people." Well, that's probably because you've just this minute killed them.





OD POINTS

- Main character can do an
- nteresting madness supernatural aspect.
- damnation, it's at least





- okes nothing but complete

INJECTED WITH A POISON

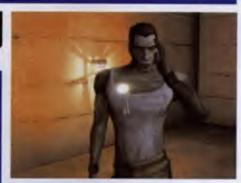
GOING TO HEAVEN THROUGH THE EYE OF A NEEDLE

The game's menagerie have been designed with methods of execution in mind. One chap, for example, is a big bloated beast-type thing whose back is home for enough rifles to form a firing squad, the Voldo rip-offs refer to decapitation while the dude pictured shows the disgusting physical manifestation of the most humane of executions, the lethal injection. Lethal injection was introduced to the USA in 1977 and in twenty years it would have been used to kill 267 men and one woman, most of whom died painlessly and didn't suffer the indignity of having to point out a decent vein. The first country to emulate the US's groundbreaking method of judicial



So I'm stuffing you with Domestos – at least I was voted in.

execution was China, a country famous in certain untravelled circles for taking on stroppy students with tanks. Show the way USA! George W Bush presided over 156 deaths when he was governor of Texas and stated that they were all guilty people. Leader of the free world, indeed.





Most games have a 'thing' and The Suffering's 'thing' is that it wants to scare you. We know this is possible; we've played scary games. Problem is, The Suffering attempts to make a routine third and firstperson shoot-'em-up a terrifying prospect by fading up the occasional bitmapped image of desolation. Although the design of the initial wave of demons follows the design of Soul Calibur's Voldo and are therefore similarly gimp-like, they move like restless spiders where knives have replaced their limbs and have proven to be most effective in killing pretty much every hardened con and screw on the block. Your first weapon is a shiv, but it might as well be Thor's hammer. Not only can it slice through gimpish evil with a few swishes, it can also knock down damaged prison walls that have stood since the 18th century. This improvised blade is weapon number one: by the time you get to the Tommy Gun, slaughtering even the most contrived of demonic designs is as problematic as avoiding their set attack pattern (one

beastie even has to turn his/its back to you to fire it's spine rifles) and hosing down firepower. And all the time spent making the blood stick to your grubby vest can't make this kind of interaction with hell scarv. Thanks to your large arsenal of available weapons it's incredibly pedestrian, thanks to the slickless aiming controls it isn't strictly what we'd deem fun.

Would Silent Hill be at all terrifying if you could just kick a nurse's head off? Don't even imagine it since it may give you the impression that The Suffering is at least amusing when that simply is not the case. Once you've killed half a dozen creatures the rest become as differential as sprout number 6432H is to 6432F in the biggest bowl of lukewarm sprouts you've even been forced to eat. Horror, by definition, isn't boring. This, therefore, isn't horror. It's just a bloody mess tied together with a storyline that had potential. Ever notice how the word potential is almost always used as a positive when really it's a negative? Well,

check out the potential of your main character's psyche. Not only does he see visions that spring up mid-game, he may well be barking mad - or possessed by a demon. Cool! Now this is an interesting premise. Interesting until you realise your transformation pops you into the scaly shell of the Swamp Thing on steroids, a gargantuan incamation of all your primeval strength unleashed in the form of a toadman whose beefy attack comes on like a kid in the schoolyard who seriously believes he can plough through a gaggle of bullies by swirling his fists. No doubt the game would have been eerier if you had transformed into a psychopathic school kid, but no.

This is as much fun as working in a butchers, if you happen to be one of those spooky automatons that stand in the window and carve meat for eternity.

play™ hint: Wes Craven's Shocker and Clive Barker's Nightbreed are now available as a VHS and DVD video double-pack somewhere in this universe.



What caption could possibly better the slogan to this What caption could poster? It's just not go



The warning on the wall actually states that 'thou shalt not worship false idols', but Torque doesn't care, he's just too cool.



VERDICT

LOOKS



gs. Och clichéd horror set

SOUND



track, standard guns and annoying repart

GAMEPLAY



and if you get bored, you're most probably gay. Groan.

LONG TERM



OR YOU COULD



ter Cell with a totally



e control interface b

SUMMARY

Is this listless or lacklustre? When a game breeds this level of anathy in the player, you won't even care. If money spent on games is ever comparable with money spent on movies, then this is the trailer of the film you'll walk out of the theatre during. Now, how much is that worth to you?





The prison may be a dingy place but you can't fault its dedication to fly extermination. Just look at the insecticutors.





It's a testament to how great Hitman looks when it manages to make a room, post-sacrifice, look beautiful.



play* had wondered what happened to its tip for the Cauffield this year. Let this be a lesson to you: never take a tip from a horse's ghost.



This person deserves to be shot if only to rescue him from that terrible comb-over job.





HITMAN MURDER, HE WROTE CONTRACTS

ot since Lex Luthor decided to dedicate his life to trying to destroying Superman has a villainous bald man managed to capture our attention quite like Hitman Contracts' Agent 47. Despite being in essence, Superman meets Dawson's Creek, TV show Smallville managed to entertain thanks to fact that viewers were given an insight into Lex's haunted past, and tribulations that would turn snappy dressed businessman into a calculating supervillain. Similarly, Hitman Contracts takes us deeper into the psyche of Agent 47, an on-the-brink-of-death Agent 47 to be exact, as you play out flashbacks of the assassin's early hits.

most celebrated rank attainable after the completion of a level is 'Silent Assassin', but if you want a body count closer to a Schwarzenegger/Stallone movie marathon, so be it. Hitman Contracts' strongest suit is the fact that you can play through each level with a different MO every time, or take a pick-'n'-mix approach – stealthily infiltrate a complex, but leave with all guns blazing.

To accommodate both a slow, stalking pace or a shoot-first, think later attitude, *Contracts* requires just a single control method – a first-person shooter style twin stick affair for intuitive moving and aiming, a 'creep' button and a holster weapon command to keep things

HITMAN'S IMPECCABLE PRESENTATION ENSURES THAT KEY MOMENTS STICK IN YOUR MIND LONG AFTER PLAYING

To create intrigue, a small dose of mystery never goes a miss, and a liberal measure is proffered by the game's opening level — Asylum Aftermath. The first room you find yourself in is bathed in bright, white light — a *Hitman* logo adoms the floor, slumped on it, a dead body with a streak of blood trailing. Around seemingly every corner, await Agent 47 clones in various states of deadness. A lot of questions need answering, that's for sure.

To find those answers you're going to have to shed some blood. Whether it's a small thimble full or a cascading river is entirely down to your proficiency as a hitman or thirst for gore. The

sneaky. A quick click of the R3 button and your view flips from first to third-person. If you're fussy, two alternative control methods are available – a left-handed version of the default system and a simplified method. The third-person view is handy for observing the patterns of guards and potential hits and concealing yourself away in the shadows while the first-person view is preferable for blasting your way to freedom if your recon goes awry. It provides considerably more freedom than Everything Or Nothing's lock-on based control system, and despite bearing many similarities with The Suffering's controls, feels far smoother.



STANLES MADE IN U.S.A.

Next time the those greedy, greedy nurses and doctors ask for a pay rise we suggest the *Hitman* incentive: Do your job or die.



Some people sleep on their side, some only on their back, some, however can only sleep while surrounded by blood and held at gun-point.



There's no Christmas snow to be found in *Hitman*, just the type of snow that makes it hurt when you breathe.

PlayStation 2

HITMAN CONTRACTS

INFORMATION =

PUBLISHER: Eidos | DEVELOPER: 10 Interactive | PRICE: \$99.95 RATING: MA15+ | WEB SITE: www.atari.com.au







ard Dual Shock

IN THE KNOW

- _Uses 'revolutionary post-filter technology' for blur effects.
- _12 levels set in places such as Britain. France and Romania.
- _Includes 60Hz, Pro Logic II options and loads of death.

PRIOR FORM

"We can all relax in the knowledge that *Hitman Contracts* surpasses its predecessor in, well, every way and already looks to be one of the PS2 highlights of 2004." Preview, Issue 3



RELEASE DATE

WRITTEN BY NICK POWELL (

» IF THIS GAME WAS

A CONTRACT IT WOULD BE A MICHAEL DOUGLAS' PRE-NUP

Because not only do you secure yourself a scorching hot filly, but, if you're retarded enough to get bored of it you can drop it without any comeuppance.

STAND OUT MOMENTS



A stable full of whinnying horses keeps giving the game away.



A spot of weedkiller in the water should make things easier for us.



Not in the same keague as horse-decapitation but still pretty effective.



The key to the guy's cell is in the guard's smut-room by the way.

PLAYTIME



THROUGH THE KEYHOLE

Hitman Contracts makes excellent use of context sensitive text commands to provide a number of actions at key points – be it concealing a meat cleaver in a chicken, yes really, picking a lock, climbing through a window or peeking through the keyhole. Not only would this make Sir David Frost and Lloyd Grossman swoon with delight – it also helps greatly in scoping out what's in a room, or just having a good old perv.



That'd be a shotgun then. Better tread carefully.



A bathing suit in the shower? Oh, come on.

If there's an area of *Contracts* that's slightly less convincing it's the animation of Agent 47 himself – from the third-person viewpoint he exhibits a strange 'skating' walk and swings his arms manically when grasping a weapon in first-person – this has little impact on control thankfully, but does deduct a certain *je ne sais quoi* from his otherwise formidable mystique. Also, when it comes to repertoire, old 47 is somewhat light on moves, especially since Sam Fisher of *Splinter Cell* fame is so accommodating when it comes to busting awesome stealth shapes. Ultimately though, this has little impact on the enjoyment *Contracts* offers.

The key to successful stalking is of course, patience, especially when infiltrating buildings where you'll be mingling with your potential hit's peer group. In these situations you'll have to look out for a lonely victim, creep up on him unawares, garrotte him – or perhaps settle for the swifter, and less painstaking shot from your silenced pistol – making sure that no one spots you, or just as importantly, hears you. Your victim's clothes can then be used as a disguise to allow you to fraternise in this foreign environment. If the corpse is discovered in



Everything's so bloody neat. We prefer it when it's just plain bloody. Although this room does remind us of our old school canteen. Mmmm, chicken pie and mashed potatoes.



When making Silent Assassin is out of the question just shoot everything in sight. It is, after all, fun.



Go to page 58 of this issue, then look at this screenshot again. Now, which is really the better looking game?

the meantime, your cover will be blown and a new disguise will be required - another victim will be added to your tally, and any aims of becoming a Silent Assassin are dashed. Bodies can be dragged to less conspicuous areas, though your worries aren't over yet as people will notice if you're holding the wrong weapon, so keep them holstered until they're needed. Thankfully, you get a little more warning than a bullet in the back if suspicion levels are rising - it's called the Threat Meter, and the more wary people are of you, the higher it goes. If someone turns around and spots you with your strangling wire in hand you might want to put it away. This helps to keep Hitman's learning curve perfectly pitched, meaning you'll only die because of your own stupidity or lack of patience. Another welcome factor is the well judged differences between the difficulty levels - the harder the setting, the less you'll be able to rely on your map for recon and the less you'll be able to save your game mid-mission. In fact, on the hardest setting, saving mid-way is completely disabled, providing a real test of your skills.

So far we've been pretty blasé about the wanton killing that goes on in the world of

Contracts - throwing around the idea of garrotting people as if it's as emotive a gameplay element as kicking a football or driving a car. Thankfully it isn't. As we put it in our Hitman Contracts preview last issue, "People should be slightly disturbed. It shouldn't be so funny when you're killing people. It definitely needs to be a bit more calculated." And while we haven't come across any moments where we've felt any deep remorse for taking down a hit, each level has kept us firmly entrenched in the mindset of an assassin - killing willy-nilly will get your cover blown and send the game into anarchy. Thankfully IO Interactive has resisted, dousing the game with gore for gore's sake, creating a game with, we hesitate to say it, a mature tone. Put it this way - it shows up Midway's The Suffering for the juvenile drivel it is.

But beyond the considered approach and perfectly implemented controls, *Hitman* Contracts' impeccable presentation ensures that key moments stick in your mind long after you've switched off the console. The opening level for example, transforms from a clinical laboratory setting to a rundown institute, complete with wandering nutters

- Multiple approaches to levels caters for both wannabe ninja and butchers.
- ather effects, including mist, rain and snow, are stunning.
- id pools of blood.





- 47 isn't the most athletic of
- No cross-dressing permitted

and just a few SWAT teams' worth of Police milling around. The mood of the surroundings is suitably depressing, but spiced up by enough police officers to quell a small riot searching for you. Don a smock and pretend to be insane to slink past unhindered or kill a SWAT member, suit up and run around right under their noses. It's up to you.

There are a few occasions that your cover seems to be blown for little or no good reason, only for you to discover on a subsequent play through that you missed a vital item/object/switch/thing. Many players will be content to complete the level by throwing down and blowing all and sundry

colours in between, it's the exterior settings that really stun - and by 'stun' we mean genuinely elicit purrs of delight from viewers. Snow billows in the wind in the Alaskan level - it doesn't just look chilly, it sounds it too - when you step indoors the newfound hush and change in lighting almost makes you feel warmer. Cosy. Well, it would be if discovery didn't mean execution. Perhaps the most gorgeously presented level though is Beldingford Manor - a country residence of almost regal grandeur, draped in a cloak of night in the pissing rain. Moody. But 10 Interactive is really spoiling us, because the first vista the player gazes at is Beldingford Manor's lake

on the rain effect even extends to drops striking the surface of a puddle causing ripples. It's all in the details.

Use of music is equally on the ball, if less striking than the graphics, falling into the 'mood music' category. On occasions though, a few choice snippets of music are used with such aplomb that they transform a particular scene. For instance, a gruesome plot twist taking place on The Meat King's Party level is taken to sickening heights of depravity with the inclusion of Put Your Head On My Shoulder crackling through a nearby radio. On a later level, a rock song kicking in when a torture device is switched on adds an extra level of sadism. It's a damn sight more subtle than relying on a script that reads like having a fifteen-year-old that's just discovered Iron Maiden shouting in your ear. Sorry, that's another dig at The Suffering.

Hitman Contracts is simply the most atmospheric game we've played this year. In terms of overall presentation, it is beautifully accomplished, but more importantly, and it's becoming more and more rare these days, beneath this veneer lies a game that's enjoyable whether you approach it as a stealth specialist in need of a fresh and fulfilling adventure or simply as a mindless blast-a-thon. Or both. Unmissable.

IO INTERACTIVE HAS RESISTED DOUSING THE GAME WITH GORE FOR GORE'S SAKE, CREATING A GAME WITH A MATURE TONE

away, but we urge you to restart in search of that elusive Silent Assassin rating because there are so many strands to tie up and subtleties to discover, not to mention elements of real visual flair to soak up, that playing Hitman's missions through multiple times is much more a pleasure than a chore.

While interior locations are generously detailed with lighting ranging from gloomy to floodlit and all manner of shades and

- a view you see a grand total of twice for about fifteen seconds before getting on with more pressing and more gory matters but it is painstakingly rendered - and we appreciate that. To stare out over the water is to know a videogame-imparted a sense of melancholy. We know we're sailing pretty close to teenage, angst-laden gothwannabe melodrama here, but have you ever seen a moodier lake in a videogame before? Furthermore, the attention to detail

There's something deeply wrong on The Meat King's Party stage - it's not just the assorted weirdoes in fetish gear, the fact that the bacchanalian is being held in an abattoir, the dead horse bleeding out hanging from a hook or the fact that Opium abuse is rife. No, it's actually the Meat King himself, who appears to be something akin to a cross between that thing in Blade and Fat Bastard from Austin Powers.



The Meat King lives up to his rather disgusting title.



Hang on, we've got a great idea for a screenshot/caption mega



...Murder on the dancefloor. Badoom tish!



Arrgh! The neon lights are blinding us! We can't see! Don't panic. Just shut your eyes and ot everything until you hear a scream.



Oh, come on. We're sure that SWAT school doesn't teach you to all huddle around a

VERDICT

LOOKS



SOUND





ns. 47's move set could be broader though

LONG TERM

OR YOU COULD



HITMAN 2

Baldie's first outing on PS2 Helped pass the wait until Hitman Contracts. 91%



A bullied kid's idea of cool that just evokes complete apathy in the gamer. 50%

SUMMARY

Agent 47's air of cool actually makes us look forward to going bald. Contracts' stealth is more calculating, more spiteful and far more satisfying than Everything Or Nothing's, while the atmosphere and maturity is light years ahead of The Suffering's lowest common denominator approach to 'fun'.



PLAYLIST

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Market Scheduler Callection 15% A deleged displacement greating by law and a gas below. 15% No. 1	Aggressive Infine	88%	A great way	to spend a few hours	CART Fury	70%	Fast, fun and shallow arcade ra	cing that's easy to pic
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5

» WE SAY...

TOP 5 PLAYSTATION GAMES EVER

GRAND THEFT AUTO VICE CITY

One of the many reasons



We love the smell of cordite! Remake this with the MGS2 engine please.



■ I-Ninja

racing game

platformer

Regarded by most as the best bike-based game around

FMX

82%

arcade shoot-'em up beat-'em-up

80%

sports title

As fun as cute, psychotic ninja can be

strategy/adventure

* Indicates an import review

GAME TITLE

Aeris can't die. No, she can't be dead. How could she be dead. No!



SCORE

The Great Game in a great game.



Because you never forget your first time in the back of a Nissan Skyline.

GAME TITLE	SCORE	» WE SAY.
Downhill Domination	81%	Smooth, speedy fun with added violence
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai	73%	A decent enough challenge that fans will definitely enjoy
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 2	59%	Huge fun for about one minute and thirty seconds
Drakan	83%	Control both dragons and heroines in involving romp
Driven	46%	Will drive you to a slicker, more enjoyable distraction
Driving Emotion Type-S*	58%	Upsettingly dull racer with hideous handling
Dr Muto	65%	Platformer-by-numbers. Enough to make ya sick
Dropship	90%	The best military combat sim on the PlayStation2
	62%	Sleep-inducing hack-'n'-slash action
Dynasty Warriors 2		One of the better strategy fighting games
Dynasty Warriors 3 EL	81%	
Dynasty Warriors III	69%	Big, bold and very shallow strategic fighting game
Dynasty Warriors 4	85%	Bizarrely compelling strategy fighter set in ancient China
Dynasty Warriors 4X	78%	How Add-on packs should be
EA Sports Rugby	80%	Fine game, but perseverance is required
Ecco The Dolphin	64%	Lacking clarity, Ecco takes a swim with the fishes
Eggo Mania	47%	Tetris 'update'. Sorry, that's listlesa Tetris wannabe
EJay	85%	Allows you to make music that doesn't suck quickly
Endgame	70%	Not terrible but lacks the polish to be essential
Enter The Matrix	80%	Better than the film honestly
Ephemeral Fantasia	64%	Average RPG fair with added guitars but wah-wah
Escape From Monkey Island	80%	We have bananas today
EX Billiards*	75%	Enjoyable pool fun with a twist
Extermination	80%	A solid horror debut for the PS2
ESPN Int Track And Field	83%	Competent button-basher
ESPN International Winter Sports	81%	Largely successful winter event-a-thon with curling
	57%	Exceptionally dull ice hockey game
ESPN National Hockey Night		
ESPN NBA 2Night 2002	62%	Not as good as the worst basketball game on PS2
ESPN NHL Hockey	89%	Perfect translation of the sport
ESPN Winter Snowboarding 88	62%	A game that seems more bored than the player
ESPN Winter X-Games	65%	Staid, therefore ultimately tiring
ESPN X-Games Skateboarding	63%	A mediocre example of the skateboarding sim genre
Eve Of Extinction	64%	No multiplayer is the most heinous of crimes
Everblue	45%	A diving game. Actually make that a 'dull' diving game
Evergrace	45%	This is not the RPG we were looking for move along
Evil Dead: A Fistful Of Boomstick	77%	Fans will love it, non-fans will buy Silent Hill 3
Evil Twin: Cyprien's Chronicles	43%	Irksome, dull and ugly. Chronicle that
Extreme-G 3	87%	The fastest game the wold has ever seen!
Eye Toy: Play	83%	A lesson in original game design. Pure energy
Eye Toy: Groove	84%	Energetic, pulsing, ridiculous fun
F1 2001	76%	The graphics and the sense of speed are impressive
F1 2002	78%	Competent if unoriginal F1 game from EA. Er, again
	10.0	
F1 Career Challenge	89%	F1 just got reinvented courtesy of EA. Fine stuff Quick fix F1 thrills
F1 Championship Season 2000	73%	
F1 Racing Championship	71%	Falls short of being a pulse move
Fame Academy	50%	More Sneddon than Alex
Fantavision This one came from the first wave the fireworks in the right order, ear in the Tetris or Puzzle Bobble sens	m points and end	d up on the moon. Not a classic
Fatal Frame II	81%	Disappointing, but still solid, seque
FIFA 2002		disappointing entry in the series. Better luck next year
FIFA World Cup 2002	80%	A good, solid football videogame that's worth a look
FIFA 2003	88%	Quality reworking of the FIFA franchise
FIFA 2004	89%	Glarnourous footballer let down by flawed innovation
		Garnourous rootballer let down by hawed linlovator
Final Pantasy X* Tenth time round and things are go astounding visuals that have yet to refined combat, weapons and part	be beaten by X	
Final Fantasy X	94%	Easily the greatest RPG to grace the PS2 so fa
Final Fantasy X-2	84%	The wonder is lost in this direct seque
■ Finding Nemo	55%	Poorly executed, entertaining only thanks to Pixa
■ Fireblade	70%	Good ideas executed with no proficiency
Firevarior	91%	Games Workshop made respectable by decent FPS engine
Firewarnor	78%	Pinball and videogames melded with style
■ Flipnic		

Forbidden Siren Formula One 2001	93%	Gaming greatness gets stabbed in the back by Limies
		PS2 and we've still got a shed load of
		s a perfect racing line and definitely
deserves pole position.		
Formula One 2003	78%	Pure energy and no mistake. Full force
Frank Herbert's Dune	45%	You will be amused - entirely for the wrong reasons
Freak Out	83%	A brilliantly inventive title that truly defies any genre
Freaky Flyers	54%	Poorly disguised karter offering a couple of hours of fun
Freedom Fighters	92%	
Possibly the finest team combat	game availab	ole, this one is a brutal corker of a
behind Hitman, yet it's of an eve		ited from the off. It's by the people
Freekstyle	70%	A game too far for the SSX formula
FreQuency	82%	Hugely addictive, interactive musical gaming experience
Frogger Beyond	59%	A simplistic but addictive platforme
	44%	More appealing when he just hopped and got run ove
Frogger: The Great Quest		
Fur Fighters	79%	Unoriginal but fun platforme
Futurama	67%	Full power and pure energy combined
G1 Jockey	65%	Overpriced but enjoyable horse racing title
G1 Jockey 3	73%	Worth it if you can find it cheap, and you like horses
G-Surfers	70%	Plays a convincing Bruno to Wipeout Fusion's Tysor
Galerians: Ash	73%	Disappointing mind f**k. Like bad drugs. We'd imagine
Gauntlet: Dark Legacy	60%	Turgid update of the classic coin-op
Ghosthunter	69%	Another great looking and very flawed game
Gitaroo Man	80%	Highly enjoyable four-player mode if a little shor
Goemon*	50%	Wait for the English translation
Gladiator: Sword of Vengance	59%	10 years ago the would have been really good
Gladius	58%	Just about average, turn based action RPC
Grandia II	69%	Engrossing story almost masks a run-of-the-mill RPC
	75%	Hardly classic enough to justify revisiting
Gradius III & IV		
Grand Theft Auto III Deriders will say that without GTA it our new Marlo, then? GTAII is	the first and	Infogrames nicks pole position from Son wouldn't be so popular. So that will make only game to combine the feel of a top
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Through the passes showed in pareless greater before protection and section of the control protection of the control prote					■ Maximo VS The Army Of Zin	85%	A sequel to	Maximo in every sen
The information contact, to make that the prevention control of the information of the in				704	Max Payne	83%	It lets you shoot so	cumbags in slow moti
Help Company (1996) 40 Department of the Company o			- Consequence	AL SE	Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne	68%	Move along. The	re's nothing to see he
The Company of Stage 1999. Notice the Company of Stage 1999. Note of the Company of Stage 1999. Not	Indiana Jones: Emperor's Tomb	75%	Decent combat let	down by average puzzles	MDK2: Armageddon	74%	Nice, but	not nearly slick enou
State of Section County (1) 1916. State of Section	Indy Car Series	41%	Ovals aren't fun. One of	the worst racers on PS2				
International Congress Control (1996) Both of the Principle Congress Control (1996) Both of the Principle Congress Control (1996) Both of the Principle Congress Control (1996) Both Control (1996	Initial-D Special Stage	85%	Near-perfect	t conversion of cult racer				
No. Mode 25 of 1995. 1995. 1996. 1	International Superstar Soccer	75%		More FIFA than ISS			Services, out it some	
Signal or Processor State of S	International League Soccer	87% Bored wi	ith the established plays	ers? Try this substitute	Medal of Honor Rising Sun	81%	Frontline without the Private Ryan	but with Pearl Harbo
Self-Coord Coord 2005. The Self-Coord Self-Coord 2005. The Self-	Iron Aces 2: Birds Of Prey	40%	Shabby, dull,	, tired, mayday, MAYDAY!	■ Megaman X7	62%	An updated dow	ngrade for the franchi
Abb Coccol 2 70. Refly regressing devote in superficial conflys and file filescapes. So and filescapes and solver the many care part of any one part of any on	ISS 2	79%	Lacks depth, b	out good fun nonetheless	Men In Black 2	62%	Too limited and shallow to w	varrant serious attenti
All file regions of a district term made for a specific country. A limit of process of a district term made for a specific country. A limit of process of a district term made for a specific country. A limit of process of a district term made for a specific country. A limit of process of a district term made for an advantage of a district country. A limit of process of a district country. A limit of proc	ISS 3	69%	The beautiful g	ame has lost its looks	■ Metal Gear Solid 2 (NTSC)	77%	Self-indulgent and rusi	hed, but still Metal Ge
Added given as a cover term more for a support cover of the contract of the process of the contract of the cover of the co	Jade Cocoon 2	70%	Fairty engrossing despi	ite its superficial banality	■ Metal Gear Solid 2 (PAL)	81%	Bigger code that still can'	t live up to its own hy
is many use, at a doubt recoveryor prefer body and are more and any panel prefer body and any pa					■ Metal Slug 3	90%	Ponderous 2D sprite animation make	ing most delectable
## Accordance of the first years programmed for a town matcher, low, acquired parties of the company of the com				inal	■ Metal Arms Glitch in the System	80%	Robot on robot action.	Good humoured battli
A Right position that was the previously subth and private plant in bashing of private designed in bashing of private design				-00	■ MGS2: Substance (Import)	78%	Far more interesting and playable	than the original gar
remotings to blacker the contenses against a blackery of researching makes a blackery of researching makes to be designed to see a position of the search and the search an			53253	- Care	Micro Machines	65%	Something little that	it doesn't go a long w
Namely operations by some time general and the six portion countries. Names have depend used to see the six of the six o				N TO AN	Midnight Club II	82%	Arcade racing	takes the PS2 onli
Produced by the same man view gave, put Most Products and switches and					Midnight Club Street Racer	77%	'Best	when dipped into' rad
and stable. They not be Colorientific, but all minorigon to capture a content to the content of				A CANTO	Midway Arcade Treasures	80%	An eighties	arcade centre on a d
Whether yellow a decoret outgoer. On Junears the flooring point versioning in the proteining of the pr					■ Mike Tyson Heavyweight Boxing	20%	An absolutely li	stless piece of softwo
James Book Hydrefin Only Operating the Dord Supportion Only Name In made is supported. Only Name In made is supported. Only Name In made is supported. Name In ma			apture a Certain	VITA .	Ministry of Sound: Interactive Edition	70%	This i	s not a game we play
Herein Michael Specials and Special Specials and Special Speci			Captures the Bo	nd spirit wonderfully well	Minority Report	70%		
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Novey Manage Suck Grow Party Some rise 2000/00 bouches keep for some kine accepting stage book Grow Party Soft De Transport Party Common Contents Soft Soft Description of the Soft Soft Soft Soft Soft Soft Soft Soft			This will sink wit		■ Monsters, Inc	65%		
Audig Deck M Judge Doubt 79% Some nive 200000 touches keep this one above energing buildings and part of the properties					Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	84%		
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London Racer World Challenge 45% Almost competent racer that is sure to fly from bargain buckets a COTR: Fellowship Of The Ring 72% Something that Tolkien fans should enjoy 20.0TR: The Iwo Towers 78% Beautiful to look at, but slightly repetitous to play. Contains elves 20.0TR: The Return of the king 77% What we say is irrelevant. This is going to set. 20.0TR: The Return of the king 77% Licensed racing that'll test your skill and patience 20.0TR: The Return of the king 77% Licensed racing that'll test your skill and patience 20.0TR: The Return of the king 77% Licensed racing that'll test your skill and patience 20.0TR: The Return of the king 77% Licensed racing that'll test your skill and patience 20.0TR: The Return of the king 77% Licensed racing that'll test your skill and patience 20.0TR: The Return of the king 77% Licensed racing that'll test your skill and patience 20.0TR: The Return of the king 77% Licensed racing that'll test your skill and patience 20.0TR: The Return of the king 77% Licensed racing that'll test your skill and patience 20.0TR: The Return of the king 77% Licensed racing that'll test your skill and patience 20.0TR: The Return of the king 77% Licensed racing that'll test your skill and patience 20.0TR: The Return of the king 77% Licensed racing that'll test your skill and patience 20.0TR: The Return of the king 77% Licensed racing that'll test your skill and patience 20.0TR: The Return of the king 77% Licensed racing that'll test your skill and patience 20.0TR: The Return of the king 77% Licensed racing that'll test your skill and patience 20.0TR: The Return of the king 77% Licensed racing that'll test your skill and patience 20.0TR: The Return of the king 77% Licensed racing that'll test your skill and patience 20.0TR: The Return of the king 77% Licensed 20.0TR: The Return o								
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LOTR: The Two Towers 78% Beautiful to look at, but slightly repetitious to play. Contains elves LOTR: The Return of the king 77% What we say is irrelevant. This is going to sell. Lotus Challenge 72% Licensed racing that'll test your skill and patience Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter 69% "TII have some pure energy, please." Full power, sir The definitive American footie title Madden NFL 2001 91% The definitive American footie title Madden NFL 2002 91% Madden NFL 2003 96 85% Plenty here for the hardcore fan of the chess-like sport Madden NFL 2003 96 85% Plenty here for the hardcore fan of the chess-like sport Madden NFL 2003 96 85% Plenty here for the hardcore fan of the chess-like sport Madden NFL 2003 96 85% Plenty here for the hardcore fan of the chess-like sport Madden 2004 89% Another totally acceptable foray into the world of armoured rugby Mad Maestro 76% Simple, daft and fun but should be cheaper Mafig May Mark Of Kri 78% Extremely well-presented, if rather short, hack-'n'-slasher. Mark Of Kri 78% Extremely well-presented, if rather short, hack-'n'-slasher.								
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Mark Of Kn 18% Extremely well-presented, if rather short, hack-'n'-slasher he's never out of his Kimono. Same quality static backdrops, refined puzzles		63%	Flawed, but with	h the ability to entertain				
	Magix Music Maker		Flawed, but wit.	-	Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny*			500-7/8E
The state of the s	Magix Music Maker Manhunt	30%		Pathetic	Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny* Much better than the original, ac	cording to o		

arcade shoot-'em up beat-'em-up first-person shooter party/puzzler platformer racing game sports title strategy/adventure

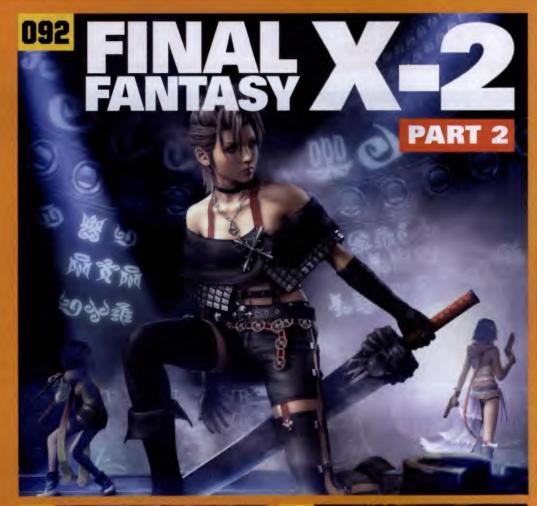
AME TITLE	SCORE	» WE SAY	GAME TITLE ISSUE	SCOR	» WE SAY
Orphen: Scion Of Sorcery	61%	This could have been fun	Rogue Ops	60%	If better versions of this game didn't already exist
Outlaw Golf	78%	Funny and good	■ Rolling	48%	A real jackass of a gar
Pac-Man World 2	60%	As average as it can be without going BEYOND average	RTX Redrock	69%	0-30 in 8.28 secs. Pure ener
Parappa The Rapper 2	80%	Parappa again, same as ever, only easier!	■ Rygar	79%	Acceptable reinterpretation of the '86 arcade gar
Paris Dakar 2	57%	Average and very basic racing	■ Rugby 2004	78%	An authentic take on the sport. Less fun than footi
	50%		Rumble Racing	84%	A fun, if slightly repetitive, rac
Perfect Ace		Energy, but not in its pure form	Rune: Viking Warlord	50%	Trite Viking saga that belongs in the dark ag
Peter Part: The Legends Of Never Land	63%	It wears its consumerism cash-in badge with pride			
Pinball	62%	Budget in price, gives a reasonable flick to the balls	Runabout 3	34%	Doesn't even get you from A to
Pirates; Legend Of Black Kat	59%	Even for kids this is a real act of piracy	■ Salt Lake 2002	37%	Lurchy steering and poor physi
Polaroid Pete	80%	Those looking for the weird will find much to like here	Scooby-Doo Night Of 100 Frights	70%	Decent and playable but in no way origin
Police 24/7	80%	Top shooting action – a nice complement to Time Crisis	Scrabble Scrabble	60%	Likė playing Scrabbie against Will S
Poolmaster	87%	Competent yet fun pool sim	Secret Weapons Over Normandy	82%	Terrific dog-fighting fias
Pop Idol	61%	Average	Socom: US Navy Seals	87%	The PS2's first online game is a beau
Portal Runner	40%	Are we going to be swayed by a girl made of plastic? No!	Scorpion King	52%	Tripe smothered in gruel and then dipped in tripe aga
Pride FC	69%	Unless you're stupid you should buy other beat-'em-ups	■ SEGA BASS Fishing Duel	61%	Shouldn't we have fishing games that are perfect by no
Prince of Persia	92%		■ SEGA Soccer Slam	55%	Rather flat experience that's best avoid
This is a game that tries to do no	thing new and pr	roves a big point by doing so. You don't	Shadow Hearts	71%	RGP with some good features and major fla
		you just have to do what you do well.	Shadowman 2	65%	Disappointing follow-up to a disappointing origin
Sands Of Time does this, and it d		errui ease.			
Project Eden	91%	and sequine you to use the	■ Shadow Of Memories	89%	Intelligent and original advents
More of a puzzle game than an a various skills of your team to over			Shadow Of Zorro	39%	The most un-Zorro game you're ever likely to p
		ne so well since The Lost Vikings.	■ Shaun Palmer's Pro Snowboarder	86%	Accessible yet tough snow-sliding t
Pro Tennis WTA Tour	63%	Bog standard women's tennis sim	Shinobi	70%	A fair attempt at the annoying 1980s coin-
Premier Manager 02/03 Season	65%	Original idea that doesn't really work this time around	Shox	87%	A decent arcade rai
Premier Manager 03/04 Season	60%	Good match play, bad menus	Shrek Party	58%	A lacklustre piece of
Primal	69%	Wander about, then just makes you wonder "WHY?"	Silent Hill 2	73%	Retreads old ground - pretty dam scary thou
			Silent Hill 3	78%	As scary as being locked in by unlockable do
Prisoner Of War	79%	Exciting yet aggravating – saved by true originality	Silent Scope	81%	Highly tense, innovative shoo
Pro Evolution Soccer	97%	The best, most accurate football game ever made		68%	An inappropriate conversion of an already short-lived ga
Pro Evolution Soccer 2	98% attent this IS from	tball. Perfect handling (to those who	■ Silent Scope 2: Dark Silhouette		
		ayer and team names aren't correct,	Silent Scope 3	82%	Old-skool thrills and kills at last worthy of the na
but you can fix those with our pre			Silpheed: The Lost Planet*	57%	Mindless blaster with limited app
Pro Evolution Soccer 3	97%		Simpsons Road Rage	86%	Like starring in your own episode, this is Simpsons-tas
		ny that gives for the most realistic	Simpsons Hit and Run	81%	Hardly original, but a fun game that stars Hon
game of football you can get with exercise. Almost as good as beat Project Zero	ting ze Germans				ine and it's a stunner. Fly various planes
Pro Rally	60%	Old-fashioned, but good enough for casual fans	expect to spend hours simply en	joying your p	olane's abilities.
Quake III Admittedly this couldn't even hoke	90% d a sparkler to Ti	meSplitters 2 in terms of size and	■ Sky Surfer*	35%	An exceptionally poor boarding gar
durability, but it still manages to			■ Slam Tennis	77%	A game tennis fans alone will apprecia
the power of gibbing.			Sled Storm	80%	Another fun title from the 'BIG' te
R-Type Final	89%	A classic shooter gets a sympathetic resurrection	■ Sly Cooper	80%	Raccoon means "he scratches with his hands." We love to
R: Racing Evolution	84%	Eventually this is great fun	Smash Cars	65%	Totally unnecess
Rally Championship	85%	Fast, playable and challenging but lacking in atmosphere	■ Smash Court	80%	Frustrating and annoying yet painfully addict
Rally Fusion	73%	Challenging and different, but still in need of a polish	Smuggler's Run	80%	Smuggle it into your cove as soon as possi
Ratchet & Clank	90%	Great fun for the young at heart	Smuggler's Run 2	66%	A pleasant engine and promising cont
Ratchet & Clank 2: L&L	82%	Polished and playable without any originality	SOCOM: US Navy SEALS*	84%	Fun single-player - we can't wait to test it on
	30%	A game that not even the fans will forgive	Soldier Of Fortune – Gold	75%	Not the best but a contender for the goriest I
Rayman M					
Rayman Revolution	70%	Fun luvin' platform adventure	SOS: The Final Escape	79%	Thinking person's adventure that's neither epic or disastr
Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc	88%	Nauseatingly numpty, but platforms fans'll love it	Soul Reaver 2: Legacy Of Kain	76%	Solid and lavish, but so unfulfil
RC Revenge Pro	78%	Novel but moody racer	Soul Calibur II If you like the idea of fighting a s	94%	out battle on your PS2 then
RedCard	78%	Hugely entertaining Vinny Jones-'em-up	there is only one choice. SC2 is		
Red Faction	94%		have ever seen and everybody, e		
It's like playing Amie in all the be			Space Channel 5	80%	Ulala and Jacko in super cool 'Simon Says' ga
Total Recall. With no squad syste set-pieces this one is certainly a			Space Race	71%	Sufficiently placatory, if ultimately throwaway de
Red Faction 2	89%	Flashier and more violent than the original, but not better	Speed Kings	70%	A Burnout 2 clone, on bikes. Very aver
		Massively enjoyable, if simplistic	Sphinx	80%	Another from the fun-platformer production
Ready To Rumble Round 2	83%				
Reign Of Fire	80%	Needed that extra couple of months in development	Spider-Man: The Movie	79%	Follows the age-old movie conversion formula but it's still o
Resident Evil Code: Veronica*	85%	More a reworking than a revolution	Splinter Cell	83%	More stealth than MGS2 and none of the g
Resident EvII: Dead Aim	56%	It amazed us that they still can't mix Resi with a lightgun	■ Simpsons Skateboarding	38%	D
Resident Evil Survivor 2 Code Veronica	63%	An almost totally wasted opportunity	Sonic Heroes	71%	A mediocre resucitation of the light-hearted platfor
	injoyable FPS title	s of every classic id game to create es on the PS2. Slick, smooth and fast, er though.	fun. Not quite WaveRace 64, bu	t a hell of a	some top-notch water-based racing lot less fuzzy round the edges. surface this is as good as it gets.
Rez	73%	Competent shooter that eventually caves into confusion	Splashdown 2	71%	
		A highly polished if unoriginal racer		90%	
Ridge Racer V	89%		Spy Hunter Midway takes the vertically scrol		and interprets it into 3D while managing to
Riding Spirits	72%	Plenty here for less demanding race fans to lap up	make a new game that plays like	e it was desi	igned during the arcade heyday. We were
	83%	Involving strategy, tense gameplay	genuinely surprised at how good		
	81%	As decent as vehicle combat games can get at the moment	Spyhunter 2	36%	Something terrible must have happene
	69%	Just like the original. Make of that what you will	Spyro: Enter The Dragonfly	73%	Slightly low-key entry considering he's a dra
Roadkill	0070		To beautiful to the second	93%	To a second
Roadkill Robin Hood Defender of the Crown	56%	Robots on a go slow	SSX		
Ring, Of Red Roadkill Robin Hood Defender of the Crown Robot Warfords Robotech Battlecry	56% 65%	Robots on a go slow Worth a look at reduced price	EA Big drops snowboarding bom PS2 game could look. Forget wit	nbs on all ou hat you have	r moms with this early showing of how a learned from the PSone's Cool Boarders
Roadivill Robin Hood Defender of the Crown Robot Warfords Robotech Battlecry Rocky A far more exciting version of pr	56% 65% 90% uglism than Kno		EA Big drops snowboarding born	nbs on all ou hat you have	r moms with this early showing of how a learned from the PSone's Cool Boarders

	on how to me	ake this better. The most complete				ill, it plays like a dream, it looks superb and	d
extreme sports game yet.				the Story mode is arguably the be			
Starsky & Hutch	84%	If you have a Gun-con and a	wheel, this is a laugh	Top Angler	65%	One of the best fishing ga	
Star Wars: Bounty Hunter	70%	Star Wars 'Jangoism' that'll only	be a must for fanboys	Top Gear Dare Devil Top Gun: Combat Zones	60%		sure, verging on
Star Wars Starfighter	92%	Was and Vision and Till Column				Not quite the top gun, but a c	
		t. We want X-wings and TIE Fighters – Still, dull new craft or not, this is still	1000	Total Club Manager 2004	72%		nus, bad match
an excellent space shoot-'em-up.	10,000			■ Treasure Planet ■ True Crime	58% 72%		er naff Disney g
Star Wars Jedi Starfighter	89%	No new surprises, bu	t still great fun to play	■ Ture Chme ■ Turok Evolution2		Good. But nowhere near a	
Star Wars Racer Revenge	84%	Playable and atmosp	heric, but lacks depth	Twin Caliber	70%	A silly little game	
Star Wars: The Clone Wars	55%	Bad missions that fail to fos	ter Star Wars emotion		59%	Nice idea, pulled off with the g	
Star Trek Elite Force	72%	Soaked in the atmo	osphere of the licence	■ Twisted Metal Black	87%		inally comes of
State Of Emergency	80%	Violent arcade fun that	s great in small doses	Ty The Tasmanian Tiger	70%	Kiddified platformer with stereotyp	
Stepping Selection*	70%	Reasonably fun, but	limited, dancing game	■ UEFA Challenge	79%	Challenge? That doesn't even be	
Street Fighter EX3	33%	Time to call it	quits for this old dog!	UFC Throwdown	73%	Cumbersome Ultimate Fighting sim	
Stitch Experiment 626	48%	Nothing here we haven't seen a t	housand times before	■ Unreal Tournament	86%		uggling against
Stuntman	85%	Frustrating, compe	lling and addictive game	■ Urban Freestyle	30%	From people who just do	
Sub Rebellion	74%	Involving underwater shooter t	hat isn't sub-standard	Vampire Night	72%	Decent lightgun action that I	
Suikoden III (Import)	82%		RPG fan fodder	■ Vexx	23%	Like having your spine ripped out the	
Summoner 2	83%	Better than the original	and well worth a look	■ Virtua Cop Elite	80%	Exhausted Time Crisis 2? Your new ch	allenge begins
Super Bust A Move	80%	As	great as it ever was	Virtua Fighter 4* A fighting dame for the connoisse	94%	s that there is much more on offer here	
Superman: Shadow Of Apokolips	59%	Even a Man Of Steel would find th	nis hard to put up with			while to get to grips with, but once you do	A STATE OF
Super Trucks	69%	It's a cliché, but this is or		you'll be holding on for dear swee			THE STATE OF THE S
Surfing H30	46%		surf-board in no time	■ Virtua Fighter 4	88%	Not quite as tasty as Tekken 4	, but still fairly
SWAT Global Strike Team	79%	Just like the real thing. Which is		■ Virtue Tennis 2	90%	A Commence of the Commence of	8.
Swing Away Golf	70%		armiess, yet adequate			nes totally redundant isn't that far fetched, them it's currently being coded in heaven.	
Sword Of The Samurai	80%	Intelligent fighter that improves		Tennis is simple, this is simply bril			No. al al al
Taz Wanted	76%	Fair attempt to translate the wee de		V-Raily 3	90%		1000
TD: Overdrive	78%	Nothing speaks volumes ex		Hello to you Career mode and we	come to you	, your chance to race other cars you.	The state of
Tekken Tag Tournament	85%		addition to the family	still has enough to make it a wort		n (CMR), this racing game from Atari on.	
Tekken 4	91%	Lijuyawe	addition to the ramily	■ Wakeboarding Unleashed	83%		absolute gentle
Namco finally delivers what Tekker). The finest version of the series.		■ Wacky Races	65%	Charmless toony racer aimed at the	
which is so fine you wonder where the horizon and everything become		w. Then you see Soul Calibur 2 on		■ Wallace & Gromit	69%	Beautiful Plasticine anima	
Tenchu: Wrath Of Heaven	93%			War Of The Monsters	60%	Further evidence to misundersta	
		cknowledged the general duffness of		Way Of The Samurai	78%	A game with few sma	
the sequel, number 3 finally brings	s the series ba	ack together. We wanted number 1	Tribut I	Weakest Link	80%		
with the graphics of a PS2, we got				■ Whiplash	67%		ou, Mrs Robins
Terminator: Dawn Of Fate	85%	Slick yet unoriginal slice of gaming that	Arnie fans will lap up			Humorous but fails to lift a	
Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines	51%	Dese	rves to be terminated	Whiteout	56%	Twenty quid is still a lot to pay for	
Tetris Worlds	65%	Reasonable version	that's way overpriced	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire	66%	All the fun of the TV show	
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003	88%	Golf's top dog retur	ns with another eagle	Wild Arms 3	82%	Pleasing adventure let down to	by being a little
180 11000 1 41 1001 2000							
	85%	Weathered	classic with knobs on	Wild Wild Racing	64%	Competent but ultim	atery wearing i
Theme Park World	85% 84%		classic with knobs on Madness on the PS2	■ Wild Wild Racing ■ Winning Eleven 7	64% 90%	Competent but ultim The Japanese Pt	-
Theme Park World The Italian Job: LA Heist		It's Midtowr		Winning Eleven 7 Wipcout Fusion	90%	The Japanese Pt	-
Therne Park World The Italian Job: LA Heist The Getaway	84%	It's Midtowr	Madness on the PS2 ti-videogame violence	■ Winning Eleven 7 Wipeout Fusion What did you expect – it's Wip3ou	90% 90% t, but with all	The Japanese PE the backing of the power of a PS2 -	
Theme Park World The Italian Job: LA Heist The Getaway The Great Escape	84% 83%	it's Midtowr Big 'f*** you' to an Decent enough adaptation	n Madness on the PS2 ti-videogame violence in of the movie classic	■ Winning Eleven 7 Wipeout Fusion What did you expect – it's Wip3ou	90% 90% t, but with all	The Japanese Pt	
Theme Park World The Italian Job: LA Heist The Getaway The Great Escape The Hobbit	84% 83% 75%	it's Micitowr Big '†*** you' to an Decent enough adaptation The least fun p	n Machess on the PS2 ti-videogame violence in of the movie classic part of LOTR in a game	■ Winning Eleven 7 Wipeout Fusion What did you expect – it's Wip3ou it's minty! The game that brought	90% 90% t, but with all	The Japanese Pi the backing of the power of a PS2 – on to the clubs returns and it's very much	ES3's a winner
Theme Park World The Italian Job: LA Heist The Getaway The Great Escape The Holbbit The Hulk	84% 83% 75% 60% 69%	it's Midtowr Big '†*** you' to an Decent enough adaptation The least fun p The Bentley Rhythm Ace of gam	a Madness on the PS2 ti-videogame violence in of the movie classic part of LOTR in a game ling, Pure, pure energy	Winning Eleven 7 Wipeout Fusion What did you expect – it's Wip3ou it's minty! The game that brought a good thing, Got any water?	90% 90% t, but with all console action	The Japanese Pi the backing of the power of a PS2 – on to the clubs returns and it's very much	ES3's a winner
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Theme Park World The Italian Job: LA Heist The Getaway The Great Escape The Hobbit The Hulk The Sims The Sims Bustin' Out	84% 83% 75% 60% 69% 89%	It's Midtowr Big '†*** you' to an Decent enough adaptation The least fun p The Bentley Rhythm Ace of gam A great existentialist wor A great existentialist wor	a Maciness on the PS2 ti-videogame violence or of the movie classic part of LOTR in a game sing, Pure, pure energy fx of some magnitude fx of some magnitude	Winning Eleven 7 Wipeout Fusion What did you expect – it's Wip3ou it's minty! The game that brought a good thing, Got any water? Wolverine's Revenge World Racing	90% 90% it, but with all console action 49% 28%	The Japanese Part of the backing of the power of a PS2 – on to the clubs returns and it's very much Logan gets an Won't convert snooker haters, but still	es3's a winner a absolute bea Depres il a solid simul
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DIAWTM | GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR GAMES

Occasionally, you may see one and might even be fortunate enough to stumble then a tongue drenched in the bitter dialogue of a Christian Dior disciple rips the beauty away as if it were never there. The gleaming smiles and sparkling eyes of smiles and sparkling eyes of yester-year soon become shallow pleads for different men and the women give chase to the beauty that left them long ago. Men mourn for the fleeting moment where once they had managed to capture hearty.

that beauty to disc... Fear not fellow gamers, for FFX-2 is here with three (yes, three) of the most beautiful women you're ever not likely to see, all waiting with heaving-chest-inducing bated breath for you to control them. To help you on your way, Station Master of its FFX-2 guide.





HOW DOES IT ALL WORK?

STATION MASTER

Getting the most out of your games.

WHAT WE SAID
We take a brief look back at what we thought of the game when we reviewed it.

CODES/UNLOCKABLES/SECRETS

If there's stuff to unlock in the game and codes to find it then we'll endeavour to box them out here.

RUNNING QUAS

If you've missed a guide in the past and have a specific query



SCREENSHOTS

We'll illustrate our guides as best as possible by using relevant screenshots and annotations.

MAIN GUIDE

The brunt of the guide rests here. In this particular instance we're exposing some useful tips.

GUIDES

Cheats/Hints/O&As

FINAL FANTASY X-2

Part two of our massive walk-through.

NEW CHEATS

New cheats for all those games you still own but couldn't complete.

CLASSIC CHEATS

Oldies but goodies – to help you clear out that backlog of great games you haven't got around to finishing yet...

FINAL FANTASY X-2



WRITTEN BY RUSSELL MURRAY

WHAT WE SAID ..





CHAPTER 3

"Spira is over-run by fiends, and only Yuna and her friends can stop them"

MISSION 1

FRIENDS EVERYWHERE

Spira is in a state of emergency as fiends pour out of temples around the world and people run scared. Yuna and the team will help, of course, but a few other things have happened. Baralai and Nooi have disappeared and again



Clearing Oaka's debt is important

your choice at the start of Chapter 2 affects the hotspots on the map. If you gave the sphere to New Yevon, Bevelle will be a hotspot, and if it was the Youth League, Mushroom Rock Road will be active.



TIP OAKA

If you have been buying items from Oaka in the cabin area and have managed to clear his debts, he will jump ship at the start of Chapter 3 and head straight back to his travel agency just north of Macalania Woods. He may need a helping hand setting up his new shop, but loads of amazing items can be purchased here later in the game. If you haven't cleared his debt yet, then make this your priority before you attempt to visit the Macalania Woods as the extra goodies come in very handy.

SIDEQUESTS

Once again there are a number of places to visit before you take on the main missions of Chapter 3. It is best to avoid all the hotspots at this point and concentrate on visiting all the other areas first to gain more experience and extra items.

LUCA

As soon as you reach Luca you'll hear about the great Sphere Break Tournament. The grand prize is a dressphere, so use the experience from the last chapter to qualify. Go to the stadium and save your game, then check out the challengers to find easy opponents. Save your game between matches and once you've won three you can take on Shinra for the championship. Use the same number of coins each round to make the core number and you'll soon beat this tricky



Clearing Oaka's debt is important here!

customer. Using coins with the Item ability can gain you the Treasure Hunt Garment Grid from Shinra, unavailable anywhere else. Win the tournament to get the Lady Luck Dressphere. Afterwards, head up the stairs and leap over to the left to raid the chest, then continue to the top of the stairs and onto the Mi'ihen Highroad.

MI'IHEN HIGHROAD

At the Highroad it appears that not only is there a fiend problem, but the Machina are also going crazy. Accept the mission and walk along the road destroying the mechanical monsters. Dash up the road blasting as many as possible and keep an eye on your health. The Dismantler ability, using the gun mage dressphere, can help to kill the mechs quickly. Save your game at the travel agency, then continue along the road and down the path on the right to the old high road. Finish off the Machina to earn 10,000 Gil and the **Undying Storm Garment Grid.**

In Chapter 3 the fiends become much tougher, and occasionally you'll face an extra enemy called a watcher. These do not attack you directly but they do act as scouts and will watch your every move. When a watcher is in a battle with you, concentrate your attacks on it first of all and then use only standard weapon attacks in order to avoid giving any clues away as to to your battle technique.



rate on the watcher in a battle!



Enter the competition to win a dressphere



Use the Dismantier ability here



Talk to Al Bhed in the agency in Macalani



In Zanarkland, speak to Isaaru by the stairs.

SIDEQUESTS

DJOSE TEMPLE

When you reach the Djose Temple, talk to Gippal in front of the temple and he'll hand over Al Bhed Primer XV. Head south across the bridge to grab a few Hi-Potions from the chest, then follow the path north to reach Moonflow.

MOONFLOW

Speak to Tobli a few times and then run as fast as you possibly can down the road towards the Shoopuf port. Take a ride across the water to the other side and then make your way down the road to Guadosalam.

GUADOSALAM

Head straight for Chateau Leblanc and enter the main room to speak with Logos and Ormi. After the conversation head upstairs and speak to Leblanc, then return to the main room and speak to Logos and Ormi again to hear about another sphere they discovered in Bevelle. Walk into the secret

GUADOSALAM

GATEKEEPER

After starting the sidequest in the Bikanel Desert, you will need to return here to find the third gatekeeper, Lobeira. Head down the hidden passageway, then enter Ormi's room directly ahead of you and open the strange chest in the centre of the room. Lobeira is inside and then you can start the minigame. This shootout is much tougher than the previous ones.

passage at the back of the room and then follow the passage past the save sphere and into the room on the right. Watch the spheres to spot Nooj in Bevelle, and then examine the corner of the room for the Gaol Sphere. Maechen will appear and tell you more stories. Return to the save sphere and follow the passage to Leblanc's secret room, then open the chest in the corner to collect the Tetra Band. Search the other side of the room and climb onto the crate, then follow the small balcony around the top and open the wellhidden chest in the corner to grab Crimson Sphere 4. You can now exit the chateau and head south onto the Thunder Plains.

THUNDER PLAINS

The maintenance man is still working on the towers and asks if you have returned to help him. You can try if you wish to calibrate the remaining towers, but it is not necessary. Head to the travel agency and stock up on items, then continue up the path to find Lian and Ayde Ronso. They ask you where you think they may be able to get some information about Kimahri's horn and you can tell them anywhere you wish. In Chapter 4. Lian and Ayde will be in the place you previously suggested. From here, continue to the end of the path and into Macalania Woods.



Lain and Ayde will appear where you wish.

THUNDER PLAINS

GATEKEEPER

After visiting the Bikanel Desert, return here to find Islaya, the sixth Cactuar gatekeeper. Beat him at the shooting game and he will agree to follow you to the Cactuar Nation.

MACALANIA WOODS

Follow the glowing path to the junction and open the chest on the left to collect a Gold Bracer. then continue to the end of the path and look at the small lake on the right. Speak to the musicians and they'll tell you about their new friend. Speak to the Gel for the Howling Wind Garment Grid. Get your team ready for a battle and then exit the woods to the north. The travel agency is overrun with fiends and you have to defeat them without stopping to heal. Use any time at the end of the battle to cure status ailments and keep an eye on your health levels. Finish all the battles and your reward is the Pride of the Sword Garment Grid. You can enter the agency, and inside you'll find an injured Al Bhed. He'll hand over the Berserker Dressphere and Al Bhed Primer I. Soon after, he passes away and Oaka arrives to pay off his debt. At last he has his shop



■ The decision: who to give the sphere to...

back and you can return here later for some amazing items.

BEVELLE

Your choice at the start of Chapter 2 is important. If you chose to give the sphere to the Youth League you can only progress as far as the gate at this time. If you sided with New Yevon you can witness a fight in front of the temple and will then be returned to the Celsius.

ZANARKAND RUINS

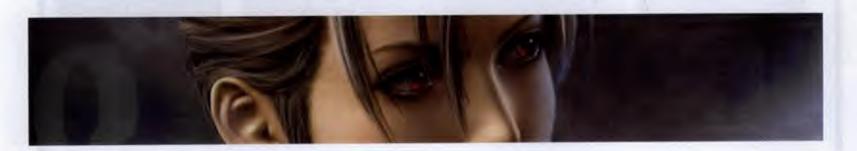
Head straight along the path into the temple, then speak to Isaaru near the stairs. He says there seems to be no change at the temple apart from the monkeys, who are taking over. If you completed the Monkey Love minigame in the last chapter there is nothing else to do apart from follow the path to the Chamber of the Fayth and collect the items from inside the chests.

MUSHROOM ROCK ROAD

There isn't much to do apart from talk to Yaibal and Lucil. You can, however, collect **2,000 Gil** from the chest a little further up the road.

CALM LANDS

The first stop is the bottom of the gorge where fiends have trapped tourists inside the cave. Head inside and start saving the tourists. Each has specific needs or requirements and you must take these into account before rescuing them. Of course if you wish to gain more experience you could opt to lead them from the cave one at a time. Use the map to save the tourists in the correct





FINAL **FANTASY X-2**



O Come to Wakka's aid in the battle



O Use this key to unlock a chest with a Search So



Run past the guards when they aren't looking

SIDEQUESTS

order. Once you have rescued 13 people, return them to the entrance. You'll be rewarded with the Energy Cores required to operate the teleporters and the Besaid Key. Exit the cave and speak to the guy on the right for an Energy Core.

Return to the cave and use the first teleporter to warp to the back of the cave, then use the teleporter here to gain access to the hidden chamber to the right. Grab the Lightning Gleam in the chest, then rescue the tourist and guide him to the cave entrance. He will hand over Energy Core 8 and you can use the teleporter to return to the back of the cave. Enter the second secret chamber to the left, then grab the Wall Ring from the chest and free the last tourist. Return him to the entrance to complete the rescue mission, then head to the back of the cave once more. Use the teleporter to enter the Chamber of the Fayth and get ready to fight (YOJIMBO). Afterwards, you'll be returned to the Celsius, but there are more missions for you to complete in the Calm Lands. Head back to the travel agency, then walk east across the plains to Clasko's chocobo ranch. Here you can view the chocobos that you have captured and feed them greens to

BOSS FIGHT

Garik is no pushover and can

have a few helping hands

the gun mage dressphere

and also steal a

depending on how well you

answered their questions in the first two chapters. If you have

equipped you can learn the Blue

Bullet Mighty Guard from Garik

Use your strongest attacks on

Garik and try to reduce his MP

to stop him using magic attacks

and defences. Keep pummelling

away and soon the battle will

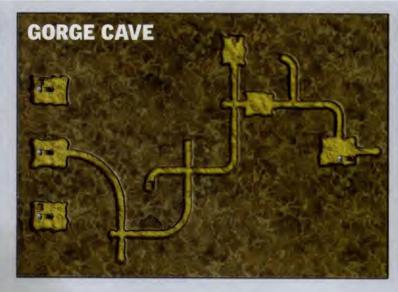
go to battle with the Guado.

return to the Celsius.

end and Garik will agree not to

After it's over, you'll receive the

and can



raise their levels. Feed them all, then send a few out around Spira to search for items. Head back to the gorge and return to the Chamber of the Fayth to collect a Star Bracer from inside a hidden chest located near by.

MT GAGAZET

Speak to Kimahri. He will hand over the Trainer Dressphere and you can head up the mountain. Follow the Ronso youth, fighting random battles and activating the teleporters en route. When you reach Fayth Scar continue past the cliffs and into the cave, then activate the teleporters and follow

the path to the open area where you'll catch up with (GARIK).

BIKANEL DESERT

Nhadala asks Benzo to accompany you to the Cactuar Nation to speak with Marnela. When you arrive Marnela will talk of a huge fiend buried beneath the sand and ask for your help to find the ten gatekeepers who are on location around Spira (GATEKEEPERS 2). When you have finished here, ride back to camp and go to the Oasis where you'll find a caravan selling items and also see Lobivia, the first of the gatekeepers.

BOSS FIGHT

Most of Yojimbo's attacks are very powerful and he has the ability to reduce your MP to zero, making magic attacks impossible. Use your strongest attacking dresspheres and equip anti-poison items. Keep whacking away and use a chocobo wing if necessary to speed up the rate of attack. You



Steal a Power Wrist here if you have a thief.

can steal a Power Wrist from Yojimbo if you have the mug ability or a thief in your party and watch out for his Zanmato attack that can reduce your entire party to 1HP and 1MP. If you win this battle you'll be rewarded with a Recovery Bracer and the Tetra Master **Garment Grid.**

CARAVAN

By the Oasis there is a group of Hypellos offering accessories for sale. This is the only place you can buy some of these items, so use your spare cash and grab a few while you can!

Item	Price
Black Choker	4,000
Potpourri	4,000
Gris-Gris Bag	4,000
Pearl Necklace	4,000
Dragonfly Orb	4,000
Pretty Orb	4,000
Chaos Shock	15,000
Fury Shock	15,000
Lag Shock	15,000
System Shock	15,000

GATEKEEPERS

Speak to the Cactuar Mothers and they'll give you a few clues. You can only track down the first six gatekeepers in this chapter and will have to find the rest in chapter five. Once you have found one, you must compete in a shooting minigame and they'll agree to return to their mothers.

Gatekeeper	Location
Lobivia	Oasis
Toumeya	Besaid Island
Lobeira	Guadosalam
Areg & Arroja	Clam Lands
Islaya	Thunder Plains

GATEKEEPERS

After visiting the Bikanel Desert, return to the Calm Lands and walk south towards Mount Gagazet. Just after passing the bridge you'll find the gatekeepers Areq and Arroja riding merrily around on their chocobo. Stop them to play (and win) the shooting minigame and then be sure to return the two to the Cactuar Nation.









MISSION 2

Go down the hill into the village and speak to Lulu to get the lowdown on what's been happening since you left. After the conversation, head outside and speak to Shinra about the Comm spheres and you'll overhear an argument between Wakka and Beclem about the temple. Dash to the temple and speak to Beclem, then head up the stairs to help Wakka. Once inside the temple battle the fiends that appear, then make your way down the steps and along the corridor to catch up with your buddy. It seems that the fiends are all appearing from the Chamber of the Fayth, so step onto the lift and ride to the bottom to meet (VALEFOR).

After the battle you're returned to the Celsius, but there is still plenty more for you to do on Besaid Island. Return to the village and visit the temple again, then use the key you were given in the Calm Lands to unlock the chest and grab the Search Sphere. Go to the room next door and talk to the man to find out how to use the search sphere, then set out to find the next four ciphers. Walk into the village and search between the

huts on the left to find a small shelter. Use the search sphere to pinpoint the exact spot, then dig up the sphere under the ground. Now use the camera to search the local area and look for a glowing number nearby. Once you've found it, head out of the village and use the sphere again in the area where the Aurochs are training to uncover another sphere. Use the camera to zoom in on the second cipher on the cliff top, then continue along the path towards the beach. Search the path near the waterfalls to find another camera sphere, then zoom in to discover another cipher on the cliff top.

To find the last hidden cipher, continue down towards the cave and search the small ledge over the pool. Dig up the last camera sphere and look at the trees on the cliff opposite to grab the last digit. Return to the cave and go in, then search the first passage on the right for another keypad. Enter the code, then follow the passage to the cliff top. Head left along the ledge and open the chest at the end to collect the Raging Giant **Garment Grid.**

BESAID ISLAND

BOSS FIGHT

This aeon is pretty mean and has attacks that can cripple your party very quickly. Use one character for healing wounds and keep yourself up on the battle, then use your two strongest physical dresspheres or magic attacks. Watch out for Valefor's Sonic Wing that reduces your MP and switch dresspheres or use an ether so you can keep fighting. Keep battling and soon the creature will fall so you can claim a Moon Bracer.

GATEKEEPER

Take the time to explore the beach while in Besaid and you'll find Toumeya, the second Cactuar gatekeeper. Play the shooting mini-game and defeat Toumeya and he'll come with you back to Cactuar Nation.

SIDEQUESTS

BEVELLE

When you arrive in Bevelle, the first thing you'll see is Gippal heading into the temple. Quickly rush to the temple, then jump into the lift and ride to the top. Head through the door and speak to the people on the rooftop to receive the Electrocutioner accessory and a Hypno Crown. Ride the lift back to the ground floor and alter the drive settings again like you did in the previous chapter, then ride the central lift down to the basement. Walk forwards towards the save point and you'll see Gippal by the sphere. Save your progress and grab the Chocobo Feathers from the chest, then follow Gippal into the undercity. Go back to the chamber where Vegnagun was being hidden and you'll witness a strange scene with Nooi, Baralai and Gippal. After the conversation you rush in to stop the madness and must fight a Malboro. As soon as the battle is over all three leaders will have gone and you can collect Crimson Sphere 1 from the floor. Now jump onto the airship to watch your new sphere.

Boss Fight

This aeon is also a nasty creature, and can soak up any fire element attacks and use them to heal himself. Cast Blizzaga to cause major damage to this creature and keep hitting it with your most powerful physical attacks at each round. Have a White Mage of Alchemist with the party to heal should things become difficult. You can steal a **Fiery** Gleam from Ifrit during the battle and will be rewarded with some Angel Earrings when the battle is over.



MISSION 3

Go down the hill into the village and speak to Lulu to get the lowdown on what's been happening since you left. After the conversation, head outside and speak to Shinra about the Comm spheres and you'll overhear an argument between Wakka and Beclem about the temple. Dash to the temple and speak to Beclem, then head up the stairs to help Wakka. Once inside the temple battle the fiends that appear, then make your way down the steps and along the corridor to catch up with your buddy. It seems that the fiends are all appearing from the Chamber of the Fayth, so step onto the lift and ride to the bottom to meet (VALEFOR).

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KITTIKA ISLAND

the village and search between the huts on the left to find a small shelter. Use the search sphere to pinpoint the exact spot, then dig up the sphere under the ground. Now use the camera to search the local area and look for a glowing number nearby. Once you've found it, head out of the village and use the sphere again in the area where the Aurochs are training to uncover another sphere. Use the camera to zoom in on the second cipher on the cliff top, then continue along the path towards the beach. Search the path near the waterfalls to find another camera sphere, then zoom in to discover another cipher on the cliff top.

To find the last hidden cipher, continue down towards the cave and search the small ledge over the pool. Dig up the last camera sphere and look at the trees on the cliff opposite to grab the last digit. Return to the cave and go in, then search the first passage on the right for another keypad. Enter the code, then follow the passage to the cliff top. Head left along the ledge and open the chest.



FINAL FANTASY X-2







Speak to Shinra to access the CommSpheres

MISSION 4

When you arrive at the temple it appears that Gippal has not yet returned. Accept the mission to clear the fiends and you'll instantly be rewarded with Al Bhed Primer XIV. Head into the temple and climb the stairs towards the Chamber of the Fayth. Walk forwards fighting random fiends, then ride the lift in the centre to the level above. Speak to the guards by the stairs, then head into the room ahead and grab a Wristband from the



Liberate the temple from the flends!

KILLIKA ISLAND

chest. One of the statues here will disable the electric barrier blocking the stairs, so push them one at a time until you find the right one. Head to the stairs and take a moment to heal your wounds, then walk up and get ready to face (IXION). After the battle Yuna falls into the hole and you get to witness more strange events. Just sit back and watch, then after receiving two more spheres the chapter will end.



Grab the wrostband from the chest.

BOSS FIGHT

Another aeon awaits inside the temple and this time it has been merged with Al Bhed Machina. Ixion is immune to lightning based attacks, so use Watega and Liquid Steel to cause good damage. It is wise to have a healer in your party too as Ixion's attacks can do quite a bit over 2000 damage. Make sure that you manage to steal some Sprint Shoes before ending the battle as well, and keep



You can steal a Fiery Gleam in this fight.

bashing away with your most powerful attacks to bring this aeon down. When you eventually win you'll receive a Soul Of Thamasa and the **Unwavering Guard Garment Grid for** your efforts.

CHAPTER 4

"Yuna must view the action through the CommSpheres"

MISSION 1 BACK ON CELSIUS

Everyone is delighted that Yuna has made it back and Shinra reveals a little more about the mysterious Lenne. After the conversation head to the lift and then ride up to the deck to show the spheres to Paine. She will explain a little of what happened between her and the three leaders and then will head back to the bridge. Take the lift to the engine room and grab the items inside the chests, then head back to the bridge to receive Al Bhed Primer XI. Speak to Shinra and you can access the CommSphere Network that he had been busy installing while you battled the fiends in the previous chapter. Access Besaid and speak with Wakka, then check Killika and have a conversation with Dona. The other places to check are Bevelle and Mushroom Rock Road, but be aware that the Mushroom Rock Road CommSphere will be tossed into the ocean if you sided with New Yevon at the start of Chapter 2. Exit the menu and speak to Buddy and you'll decide what to do next. Before heading to Moonflow, it would be a good idea to check the rest of the (COMMSPHERE NETWORK)

MI'IHEN MYSTERY

When you open the CommSphere to Mi'ihen, Rin will ask you to help solve a riddle. Agree and he'll tell you about the CommSpheres he has installed along the Highroad. The idea is to watch the events through these Spheres and call Rin if you see anything suspicious. Depending on the actions you see a different culprit can be framed for the tragedy. Each time you call Rin he sorts out the events and either moves on or tells you that you are getting to the very heart of the matter. Depending on what scenes you witness there are a possible four culprits, Chocobo Eater, The Prophet, Rikku, and even Rin himself.

COMMSPHERE NETWORK

With the CommSphere Network fully operational you can check on all the areas in Spira from the comfort of the airship. It is best to visit every location and search around for anything that might be a little strange or out of the ordinary. Use the camera to pan around and zoom in on anything that looks a little suspicious. Each area has several scenes for you to watch and there are major amounts of completion percentages to be gained by watching them all. Here are the number of scenes available in each area, but be careful not to cut the story short or you may not be awarded the bonus.

Area	Scenes
Besaid	7
Killika Port	4
Killika Temple	2
Luca	4
Mushroom Rock Road (Youth League only)	6
Djose Temple	6
Moonflow	5
Guadosalam	7
Thunder Plains	3
Macalania Woods Entrance	2
Macalania Woods Travel Agency	9
Bikanel Desert Camp	2
Bikanel Desert Cactuar Nation	2
Clam Lands Travel Agency	5
Mt Gagazet Gate	2
Mt Gagazet Hot Springs	16
Zanarkand	1













■ Watch every scene, all the way through!

It may take a while, but stick with it!

MISSION 2

When you arrive at the temple it appears that Gippal has not yet returned. Accept the mission to clear the fiends and you'll instantly be rewarded with AI Bhed Primer XIV. Head into the temple and climb the stairs towards the Chamber of the Fayth. Walk forwards fighting random fiends, then ride the lift in the centre to the level above. Speak to the guards by the stairs, then head into the room ahead and grab a Wristband from the

of the statues here will

chest. One of the statues here will disable the electric barrier blocking the stairs, so push them one at a time until you find the right one. Head to the stairs and take a moment to heal your wounds, then walk up and get ready to face (XION). After the battle Yuna falls into the hole and you get to witness more strange events. Just sit back and watch, then after receiving two more spheres the chapter will end.

DANCE REHEARSAL

This mini-game is all about timing. Watch the symbols that appear under Rikku and tap them as fast as possible in time with the music. At the end your points are counted up and you can win one of four prizes. The rewards are as follows:

Score	Prize
0-49	Pearl Necklace
50-99	Safety Bit
100-149	Sublimator
150 or more	Shmooth Shailing

MISSION 3

Once all the Hypello are dropped off around Spira you get a few moments to get organised and rehearse. Go to the save sphere near the bridge and record your data, then head down to the cabin to find Rikku. Your dress rehearsal is about to start and you must do your best to get a reward (DANCE REHEARSAL)...

After the game go back to the bridge and check the

(COMMSPHERE NETWORK) to catch up with the events in Spira. Speak to Buddy and he'll land the airship on the Thunder Plains. Things are not quite as planned when you arrive as a few fiends have gatecrashed the party. Head north along the plains and take

out all the fiends, then head east to find a small cave. Go in and open all the chests to grab extra items, then jump over the rock platforms to come face to face with (ZALAMANDER).

THUNDER PLAINS

After the battle open the chest to grab a **Black Ring**, then exit the cave and return to the Celsius. Onboard ask Shinra to look at the crowds outside, then speak to Tobli and the concert begins. Return to the airship and manage to pick up a number of guests. Go to the bridge to speak to Maechen, who tells the story about Lenne. When it's over, go and speak to Leblanc. She hands over **Crimson Sphere 5**. Go to the bridge to watch a communication with the droppedCommSphere.

COMMSPHERE NETWORK

Once again the only way to check on the progress of the promotion is to look at the CommSpheres in each area. There are more completion bonuses available for watching all the events in each area, so put your feet up and sit back and watch the action in all its Final Fantasy X-2 glory. To help you in your progress, you will see a list of the number of scenes in each area to the right, so be sure to watch them all.

Scenes
6
4

Milika icinpic	
Luca	5
Mushroom Rock Road	6
(Youth League only)	
Djose Temple	Stolen
Moonflow	4
Guadosalam	8
Thunder Plains	1
Macalania Woods Entrance	6
Macalania Woods Travel Agency	9
Bikanel Desert Camp	1
Bikanel Desert Cactuar Nation	2
Bevelle	1
Mt Gagazet Gate	7
Mt Gagazet Hot Springs	1
Zanarkand	4

BOSS FIGHT ZALAMANDER

This gigantic lizard-like fiend is immune to magical attacks, which could make this battle rather tough. Equip your character with powerful physical dresspheres such as Berserker and Dark Knight, and then use your best attacks in order to weaken this creature. Casting Blind will help you to nullify some of the creature's physical attacks, and then make sure that you cure your party after Zalamander's Flame Breath attack. You can steal from this giant during the boss fight and you will also be rewarded ting once the with a Cri battle is over.





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STATION MASTER CHEATS AND TIPS



Another Station-Master section that's full of cheats. This month we give you the best of the new and the best of the old.

BAD BOYS H

Enter the following code on the press start screen to unlock all the cheats. You can then access them in the Police HQ menu.

CODES Unlock Cheat Menu







No, seriously. Why?

NEW CHEATS

MI: OPERATION SURMA



To unlock the level select cheat, enter profiles and highlight Jasmine Curry. Now enter the following code to open every stage. Please note you cannot save when this cheat has been activated.

CODES

Unlock All Levels 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1

TAR TREK: SHATTERED UNIVERSE



Captains Log, star date issue 100. Enter the following codes at the bridge screen to access all the games secrets:

CHEATS

All Medals and Ranks

G, G, G, O, O, O, G All Missions

②, **③**, ⊙, ⊙, **③**, ⊙, **◎** All Ships **⑤**, **⑥**, **⑥**, **⑥**, **⑥**, **⑥**, Invincibality (9, 0, (0, 0, 0, 0, 0,

Kobayashi Maru (0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, Note: These codes may not work on all versions of the game.

WRATH UNLEASHED



Use these monster codes to unlock a few hidden extras in this battle game. Enter the codes on the Main menu or the character select screen.

CODES

Large War Games Characters (Main Menu)

←, ⊕, ↑, ⊙, →, ⊙, ↓, ⊙ Double Health and Speed

(Main Menu) ψ x2, \uparrow , ψ , \leftarrow , \rightarrow , ψ , \uparrow x4, \rightarrow , \leftarrow , \odot New Vs and Team Character Variations (Character Select Screen)

@, @ x2, @##

TOMB RAIDER: ANGEL OF DARKNESS PLATINUM



Use this code to unlock the level select and also gain access to the hidden level once you have completed the Parisian Back Streets. To

gain you a few places

enter the code simply pause the game and tap the buttons quickly. Hold ♥ + ♥ + ♥ + Ø, then release and

press ⊙, ↑, ⊙, ⊙, →, ↓

SOCOM: US NAVY SEALS



Complete the game on each difficulty setting and you can open a range of extra features. Here are all the unlockable items in the game.

DIFFICULTY Ensign

UNLOCKABLES Lieutenant Jr difficulty

Lieutenant

and Terrorist Weapons Jr Lieutenant difficulty and Level Select

Lieutenant

Lieutenant Commander difficulty and MGL available

Lintenant Commander

Commander **Captain Rear**

Commander difficulty Captain difficulty Admiral difficulty **Rear Admiral** Vice Admiral difficulty

Vice Admiral Admiral



In the Hacking mode, use the CHEAT command (in Drive A:)

Infinite focus Infinite health Infinite ammo Invisibility

69E5D9E4 7F4DF451 1DDF2556

FFFFFFF1 FF00001A

Double speed Multiplayer fighting D5C55D1E

» MCCALL CAN'T BE KILLED!

)) Can you help me win the fight with McCall in XIII? I just can't seem to cause

enough damage to him to kill him before he wastes me. Do you have any advice? James Bailey

This is a tricky little battle make no mistake. There's a Medkit in the guardhouse to the right, so head straight there. Exit, then head back to where you entered. McCall will probably be between two of the huts, so unleash all your grenades at him with the automatic rifle and blast him until he goes down; it may take a few attempts, but trust us, it can be done! Take his Key and his M60 – lovely stuff! Head through the now open doors and use the key to finelly complete



1) I am having difficulty winning Gravitude on SSX3. Can you pass on any useful hints and tips to stop me being 'board' stupid!

Life getting you down? Just live a virtual one, made even easier with these cheats.

Press 19 + 19 + 19 + 19

simultaneously on the main menu to bring up the cheats menu. Enter the following codes to unlock these secrets.

CHEATS MIDAS

Unlock all objects, skins and

2 player games FREEALL All objects free

PARTY M Party Motel 2 player game

Sims mode SIMS FISH EYES First Person View

(press @ to change view)



CLASSIC CHEA

TENCHU: WRATH OF HEAVEN

CHEAT CODES

In order to get these cheats to work, you need to take note of where the cheat must be entered. If they are input in the wrong place they won't work, so pay attention for winning results.

Restore health

↑, ↓, →, ←, ⊚ x3 (Pause)

Special abilities

Hold **©** + **©** and press ↑ x2, ↓ x2. Release **©** + (Pause) and press (2, 6), (2)

Unlock all characters

⑤, **⑥**, **⑥**, **♦**, **←**, L3, R3 (Start screen)

Unlock demo level

↑, ↓, →, ←, ② x3 (Start screen)

Unlock bonus mission

 \bigcirc , \leftarrow (Start screen)

Unlock all missions

O, O, O, O, L3, R3 (Mission select screen)

Unlock all layouts

R3, L3, @, @, (Mission select screen)

Multiplayer missions

(Mission select screen) Unlock all items

Hold **⑤** + **⑥** and press ♠, **⑥** x2, ♠, **⑥** x2, ♣, ⊕ x2. →. ⊕ x2 (Item select screen)

Increase Items

Hold $\bullet + \bullet$ and press $\bullet \times 3$, \uparrow , \leftarrow , ψ , \rightarrow (Item select screen)

Increase score

hold \oplus + \oplus and press \rightarrow x2, \leftarrow x2 (Pause)(Controller 2)

DISPLAY SCORE AND TIME

→ x2. ← x2 (Pause)(Controller 2)

TONY HAWK'S **PRO SKATER 4**

Input the codes in the cheat menu and you can then turn them on/off in the options menu.

Matrix Cheat nospoon

superfly **Moon Gravity** Perfect Rail Grinds ssbsts

Perfect Manuals mullenpower

Max Special Meter doasuper

Unlock Daisy

LEGACY OF KAIN: SOUL REAVER 2

BONUS MATERIALS

At the main title screen, enter this code: ←, ②, →, ②, ↓, ⊙, ③. This will unlock more Bonus Materials, including some interesting outtakes.

PALISE CODES

Pause the game, highlight 'Help' and press Ø, Ø, Ø, ⊙, ⊙, ofollowed by any of the following codes, to hear a sound. To disable a cheat, re-enter it.

Refill Hypo: ②, ③, ⑤, ⊙, ⊙, ⊙ x3, R3

Level Skip: L3, R3, 49, 49 Invincibility: R3, L3, R3, ⊙

Infinite Phase Cloak: (3, R3, (9, L3

Rapid Fire & Infinite Ammo: (9, (9, 13 One-Hit Kills: L3, R3, @, @

Tiny Character: L3, R3, @, @ Big Characters: R3, @, @, L3 Big Head: , ⊙, ⊙,

Flying Enemies: R3, L3, ⊙, ⊙ Enemies fly further when punched or

kicked.

Character Select: x4

Press @ repeatedly to cycle through the characters available on the level.

UNLOCKABLES

Area 5: Get a 100% ranking in Areas 1-4. Lost Area: Complete Area 5 in the default game. Or play for a total of five hours. Trancemission: Get first place in the Lost

Bonus Score Attack Areas: These are unlocked in Score Attack mode when completed during the default game. Bonus Beam Types: Complete any

combination of Areas in Score Attack mode. Every five times this is done, a new beam type is unlocked.

SCARED SILLY

How do I beat Captain Kraken in Ghosthunter? I get killed before I can cause him any noticeable damage!

MORE QEA NEXT ISSUE

Near View: Get first place in two Areas in Score Attack mode.

Far View: Get first place in three Areas in

Score Attack mode. Dynamic View: Get first place in four Areas

in Score Attack mode. First-Person View: Get first place in five

Areas in Score Attack mode Zero Form & Second Form Player Skin: Get a 100% ranking in any Area. Or play for

a total of five hours. Third Form Player Skin: Get a 100% ranking in any two Areas. Or play for a total

of six hours. Fourth Form Player Skin: Get a 100% ranking in any three Areas. Or play for a

total of seven hours Fifth Form Player Skin: Get a 100%

ranking in any four Areas. Or play for a total of eight hours. Final Form Player Skin: Get a 100%

ranking in any five Areas. Or play for a total of nine hours. Morolien Player Skin: Get a 100% ranking in all Areas to unlock the Morolien

player skin. Or play for a total of ten hours. Boss Rush Mode: Get a 95% ranking in Areas 1-5

Immortality Mode: Complete the 'Direct Assault - Trance' option in the Beyond

Over Drive Infinity: Get first place in Boss Rush mode.

FREEDOM FIGHTERS

CODES

Enter these codes during gameplay

Blind Al	9,0,0,0,0,
Fast forward	4 64 69 69 69 ♦
Slow motion	4 4 9 9 9 9 →
Shotgun + misc	0,0,0,0,↑
Heavy machine gun + mis	99994
Rocket launcher + misc	99994
SMG + misc	999994
Sniper + misc	0, 0, 0, 0, 0, →
Infinite ammo	△ ← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← ←
Max charisma	0,0,0,0,4
Nail gun	0,0,0,0,0,6
FlyMo ragdolls	00000

UNLOCK HIDDEN EXTRAS

Hold on the main menu and enter the codes as follows.

Unlock Everything \uparrow , ψ , ψ , \leftarrow , \leftarrow , \odot Unlock Rocky Statue \rightarrow , \rightarrow , \leftarrow , \rightarrow , \leftarrow Double Punch Damage \rightarrow , ψ , \leftarrow , \uparrow , \leftarrow , \circlearrowleft $\psi, \leftarrow, \psi, \uparrow, \rightarrow, \odot$ Double Speed ←, ↑, ↑, ↓, →, ® Max Stats (Movie mode) \rightarrow , ψ , ψ , \uparrow , \leftarrow , \odot

Win Fight (Movie mode) \rightarrow , \rightarrow , \leftarrow , \leftarrow , \uparrow , \bullet (during fight press (9 + (2))

KNOCKOUT

EXTRA BOXERS

Enter these names (to hear a noise) in Career mode to unlock the secret fighters.

MECCA

Ashy Knucks

AUSTIN -

Ray Austin

NELSON -

Trevor Nelson

JGIAMBI -Jason Giambi

HATCHER .

Charles Hatcher

OSUNA -

Bernardo Osuna DEFIAGBN -

David Defiagbon

MRBARRY

Barry Sanders ZITO -

Chuck 7ito

BOSTICE -

David Bostice

DEMART -

David DeMartini

MCRAE 04

UNLOCKABLES

Win the following events in order to unlock these bonus cars and events:

4WD NORMAL MODE

Unlock Peugeot 206 (4WD)

Unlock Peugeot 205 T16 Evo2 (Group B)

Unlock Group B Championship

4WD ADVANCED MODE

Unlock MGC GTS (Bonus)

Unlock Ford Transit (Bonus)

Unlock Ford RS200 (Group B)

Unlock Expert Championship

2WD NORMAL MODE

Unlock Citroen 2CV (Bonus)

Unlock Volkswagen **Rally Golf**

HIGHBURY - PARAGON